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GRISLY GRISELL



GRISLY GRISELL

OR

THE LAIDLY LADY OF WHITBURN

A TALE OF THE WARS OF THE ROSES

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

London

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AND NEW YORK

1893

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Men speak of Job, and for his humblesse,
And clerkes when hem list can well endite,
Namely of men, but as in stedfastnese
Though clerkes preisyn women but a lite,
There can no man in humblesse him acquite
As women can, nor can be half so trewe
As women ben.

CHAUCER, *The Clerke's Tale*.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE LONELY BRIDE

Grace for the callant
If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg.
BROWNING.

‘THE recreant! Shall we follow him?’ was the cry of Lord Whitburn’s younger squire, Harry Featherstone, with his hand on his horse’s neck, in spite of the torrents of rain and the fresh flash that set the horses quivering.

‘No! no!’ roared the Baron. ‘I tell you no! He has fulfilled his promise; I fulfil mine. He has his freedom. Let him go! For the rest, we will find the way to make him good husband to

you, my wench,' and as Harry murmured something, 'There's work enow in hand without spending our horses' breath and our own in chasing after a runaway groom. A brief space we will wait till the storm be over.'

Grisell shrank back to pray at a little side altar, telling her beads, and repeating the Latin formula, but in her heart all the time giving thanks that she was going back to Bernard and her mother, whose needs had been pressing strongly on her; yet that she might do right by this newly-espoused husband, whose downcast, dejected look had filled her, not with indignation at the slight to her—she was far past that—but with yearning compassion for one thus severed from his true love.

When the storm had subsided enough for these hardy northlanders to ride home, and Grisell was

again perched behind old Cuthbert Ridley, he asked, 'Well, my Dame of Copeland, dost peak and pine for thy runaway bridegroom?'

'Nay, I had far rather be going home to my little Bernard than be away with yonder stranger I ken not whither.'

'Thou art in the right, my wench. If the lad can break the marriage by pleading pre-contract, you may lay your reckoning on it that so he will.'

When they came home to the attempt at a marriage-feast which Lady Whitburn had improvised, they found that this was much her opinion.

'He will get the knot untied,' she said. 'So thick as the King and his crew are with the Pope, it will cost him nothing, but we may, for very shame, force a dowry out of his young knight-hood to get the wench into Whitby withal!'

‘So he even proffered on his way,’ said the Baron. ‘He is a fair and knightly youth. ’Tis pity of him that he holds with the Frenchwoman. Ha, Bernard, ’tis for thy good.’

For the boy was clinging tight to his sister, and declaring that his Grisley should never leave him again, not for twenty vile runaway husbands.

Grisell returned to all her old habits, and there was no difference in her position, excepting that she was scrupulously called Dame Grisell Cope-land. Her father was soon called away by the summons to Parliament, sent forth in the name of King Henry, who was then in the hands of the Earl of Warwick in London. The Sheriff’s messenger who brought him the summons plainly said that all the friends of York, Salisbury, and Warwick were needed for a great change that

would dash the hopes of the Frenchwoman and her son.

He went with all his train, leaving the defence of the castle to Ridley and the ladies, and assuring Grisell that she need not be downhearted. He would yet bring her fine husband, Sir Leonard, to his marrow bones before her.

Grisell had not much time to think of Sir Leonard, for as the summer waned, both her mother and Bernard sickened with low fever. In the lady's case it was intermittent, and she spent only the third day in her bed, the others in crouching over the fire or hanging over the child's bed, where he lay constantly tossing and fevered all night, sometimes craving to be on his sister's lap, but too restless long to lie there. Both manifestly became weaker, in spite of all Grisell's simple

treatment, and at last she wrung from the lady permission to send Ridley to Wearmouth to try if it was possible to bring out Master Lambert Groot to give his advice, or if not, to obtain medicaments and counsel from him.

The good little man actually came, riding a mule. ‘Ay, ay,’ quoth Ridley, ‘I brought him, though he vowed at first it might never be, but when he heard it concerned you, mistress—I mean Dame Grisell—he was ready to come to your aid.’

Good little man, standing trim and neat in his burgher’s dress and little frill-like ruff, he looked quite out of place in the dark old hall.

Lady Whitburn seemed to think him a sort of magician, though inferior enough to be under her orders. ‘Ha! Is that your Poticary?’ she demanded, when Grisell brought him up to the

solar. 'Look at my bairn, Master Dutchman ; see to healing him,' she continued imperiously.

Lambert was too well used to incivility from nobles to heed her manner, though in point of fact a Flemish noble was far more civilised than this North Country dame. He looked anxiously at Bernard, who moaned a little and turned his head away. 'Nay, now, Bernard,' entreated his sister ; 'look up at the good man, he that sent you the sugar-balls. He is come to try to make you well.'

Bernard let her coax him to give his poor little wasted hand to the leech, and looked with wonder in his heavy eyes at the stranger, who felt his pulse, and asked to have him lifted up for better examination. There was at first a dismal little whine at being touched and moved, but when a pleasantly acid drop was put into his little parched

mouth, he smiled with brief content. His mother evidently expected that both he and she herself would be relieved on the spot, but the Apothecary durst not be hopeful, though he gave the child a draught which he called a febrifuge, and which put him to sleep, and bade the lady take another of the like if she wished for a good night's rest.

He added, however, that the best remedy would be a pilgrimage to Lindisfarne, which, be it observed, really meant absence from the foul, close, feverish air of the castle, and all the evil odours of the court. To the lady he thought it would really be healing, but he doubted whether the poor little boy was not too far gone for such revival ; indeed, he made no secret that he believed the child was stricken for death.

‘Then what boots all your vaunted chirurgery !’

cried the mother passionately. 'You outlandish cheat! you! What did you come here for? You have not even let him blood!'

'Let him blood! good madame,' exclaimed Master Lambert. 'In his state, to take away his blood would be to kill him outright!'

'False fool and pretender,' cried Lady Whitburn; 'as if all did not ken that the first duty of a leech is to take away the infected humours of the blood! Demented as I was to send for you. Had you been worth but a pinch of salt, you would have shown me how to lay hands on Nan the witch-wife, the cause of all the scathe to my poor bairn.'

Master Lambert could only protest that he laid no claim to the skill of a witch-finder, whereupon the lady stormed at him as having come on false

pretences, and at her daughter for having brought him, and finally fell into a paroxysm of violent weeping, during which Grisell was thankful to convey her guest out of the chamber, and place him under the care of Ridley, who would take care he had food and rest, and safe convoy back to Wearmouth when his mule had been rested and baited.

‘Oh, Master Lambert,’ she said, ‘it grieves me that you should have been thus treated.’

‘Heed not that, sweet lady. It oft falls to our share to brook the like, and I fear me that yours is a weary lot.’

‘But my brother ! my little brother !’ she asked. ‘It is all out of my mother’s love for him.’

‘Alack, lady, what can I say ? The child is sickly, and little enough is there of peace or joy in

this world for such, be he high or low born. Were it not better that the Saints should take him to their keeping, while yet a sackless babe ?'

Grisell wrung her hands together. 'Ah ! he hath been all my joy or bliss through these years ; but I will strive to say it is well, and yield my will.'

The crying of the poor little sufferer for his Grisley called her back before she could say or hear more. Her mother lay still utterly exhausted on her bed, and hardly noticed her ; but all that evening, and all the ensuing night, Grisell held the boy, sometimes on her lap, sometimes on the bed, while all the time his moans grew more and more feeble, his words more indistinct. By and by, as she sat on the bed, holding him on her breast, he dropped asleep, and perhaps, outwearied as she was, she slept too. At any rate all was still, till she

was roused by a cry from Thora, 'Holy St. Hilda! the bairn has passed!'

And indeed when Grisell started, the little head and hand that had been clasped to her fell utterly prone, and there was a strange cold at her breast.

Her mother woke with a loud wail. 'My bairn! My bairn!' snatching him to her arms. 'This is none other than your Dutchman's doings, girl. Have him to the dungeon! Where are the stocks? Oh, my pretty boy! He breathed, he is living. Give me the wine!' Then as there was no opening of the pale lips, she fell into another tempest of tears, during which Grisell rushed to the stair, where on the lowest step she met Lambert and Ridley.

'Have him away! Have him away, Cuthbert,' she cried. 'Out of the castle instantly. My

mother is distraught with grief; I know not what she may do—to him. O go! Not a word!’

They could but obey, riding away in the early morning, and leaving the castle to its sorrow.

So, tenderly and sadly was little Bernard carried to the vault in the church, while Grisell knelt as his chief mourner, for her mother, after her burst of passion subsided, lay still and listless, hardly noticing anything, as if there had fallen on her some stroke that affected her brain. Tidings of the Baron were slow to come, and though Grisell sent a letter by a wandering friar to York, with information of the child’s death and the mother’s illness, it was very doubtful when or whether they would ever reach him.

CHAPTER XV

WAKEFIELD BRIDGE

I come to tell you things since then befallen.
After the bloody fray at Wakefield fought,
Where your brave father breathed his latest gasp.

SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry VI.*, Part III.

CHRISTMAS went by sadly in Whitburn Tower, but the succeeding weeks were to be sadder still. It was on a long dark evening that a commotion was heard at the gate, and Lady Whitburn, who had been sitting by the smouldering fire in her chamber, seemed suddenly startled into life.

‘Tidings,’ she cried. ‘News of my lord and son. Bring them, Grisell, bring them up.’

Grisell obeyed, and hurried down to the hall. All the household, men and maids, were gathered round some one freshly come in, and the first sound she heard was, 'Alack! Alack, my lady!'

'How—what—how——' she asked breathlessly, just recognising Harry Featherstone, pale, dusty, blood-stained.

'It is evil news, dear lady,' said old Ridley, turning towards her with outstretched hands, and tears flowing down his cheeks. 'My knight. Oh! my knight! And I was not by!'

'Slain?' almost under her breath, asked Grisell.

'Even so! At Wakefield Bridge,' began Featherstone, but at that instant, walking stiff, upright, and rigid, like a figure moved by mechanism, Lady Whitburn was among them.

‘My lord,’ she said, still as if her voice belonged to some one else. ‘Slain? And thou, recreant, here to tell the tale!’

‘Madam, he fell before I had time to strike.’ She seemed to hear no word, but again demanded, ‘My son.’

He hesitated a moment, but she fiercely reiterated.

‘My son! Speak out, thou coward loon.’

‘Madam, Robert was cut down by the Lord Clifford beside the Earl of Rutland. ’Tis a lost field! I barely ’scaped with a dozen men. I came but to bear the tidings, and see whether you needed an arm to hold out the castle for young Bernard. Or I would be on my way to my own folk on the Border, for the Queen’s men will anon be everywhere, since the Duke is slain!’

‘The Duke! The Duke of York!’ was the cry, as if a tower were down.

‘What would you! We were caught by Somerset like deer in a buck-stall. Here! Give me a cup of ale, I can scarce speak for chill.’

He sank upon the settle as one quite worn out. The ale was brought by some one, and he drank a long draught, while, at a sign from Ridley, one of the serving-men began to draw off his heavy boots and greaves, covered with frosted mud, snow, and blood, all melting together; but all the time he talked, and the hearers remained stunned and listening to what had hardly yet penetrated their understanding. Lady Whitburn had collapsed into her own chair, and was as still as the rest.

He spoke incoherently, and Ridley now and

then asked a question, but his fragmentary narrative may be thus expanded.

All had, in Yorkist opinion, gone well in London. Henry was in the power of the White Rose, and had actually consented that Richard of York should be his next heir, but in the meantime Queen Margaret had been striving her utmost to raise the Welsh and the Border lords on behalf of her son. She had obtained aid from Scotland ; and the Percies, the Dacres of Gilsland, and many more, had followed her standard. The Duke of York and Earl of Salisbury set forth to repress what they called a riot, probably unaware of the numbers who were daily joining the Queen. With them went Lord Whitburn, hoping thence to return home, and his son Robert, still a squire of the Duke's household.

They reached York's castle of Sendal, and there merrily kept Christmas; but on St. Thomas of Canterbury's Day they heard that the foe were close at hand, many thousands strong, and on the morrow Queen Margaret, with her boy beside her, and the Duke of Somerset, came before the gate and called on the Duke to surrender the castle, and his own vaunting claims with it, or else come out and fight.

Sir Davy Hall entreated the Duke to remain in the castle till his son Edward, Earl of March, could bring reinforcements up from Wales; but York held it to be dishonourable to shut himself up on account of a scolding woman, and the prudence of the Earl of Salisbury was at fault, since both presumed on the easy victories they had hitherto gained. Therefore they sallied out to-

wards Wakefield Bridge, to confront the main body of Margaret's army, ignorant or careless that she had two wings in reserve. These closed in on them, and their fate was certain.

‘My lord fell in the *melée* among the first,’ said Featherstone. ‘I was down beside him, trying to lift him up, when a big Scot came with his bill and struck at my head, and I knew no more till I found my master lying stark dead and stripped of all his armour. My sword was gone, but I got off save for this cut’ (and he pushed back his hair) ‘and a horse’s kick or two, for the whole battle had gone over me, and I heard the shouting far away. As my lord lay past help, methought I had best shift myself ere more rascaille came to strip the slain. And as luck or my good Saint would have it, as I stumbled among the corpses I heard a

whinnying, and saw mine own horse, Brown Weardale, running masterless. Glad enough was he, poor brute, to have my hand on his rein.

‘The bridge was choked with fighting men, so I was about to put him to the river, when whom should I see on the bridge but young Master Robin, and with him young Lord Edmund of Rutland. There, on the other side, holding parley with them, was the knight Mistress Grisell wedded, and though he wore the White Rose, he gave his hand to them, and was letting them go by in safety. I was calling to Master Rob to let me pass as one of his own, when thundering on came the grim Lord Clifford, roaring like the wind in Roker caves. I heard him howl at young Copeland for a traitor, letting go the accursed spoilers of York. Copeland tried to speak, but Clifford dashed him aside

against the wall, and, ah! woe's me, lady, when Master Robin threw himself between, the fellow—a murrain on his name—ran the fair youth through the neck with his sword, and swept him off into the river. Then he caught hold of Lord Edmund, crying out, “Thy father slew mine, and so do I thee,” and dashed out his brains with his mace. For me, I rode along farther, swam my horse over the river in the twilight, with much ado to keep clear of the dead horses and poor slaughtered comrades that cumbered the stream, and what was even worse, some not yet dead, borne along and crying out. A woful day it was to all who loved the kindly Duke of York, or this same poor house! As luck would have it, I fell in with Jock of Redesdale and a few more honest fellows, who had 'scaped. We found none but friends when

we were well past the river. They succoured us at the first abbey we came to. The rest have sped to their homes, and here am I.'

Such was the tenor of Featherstone's doleful history of that bloodthirsty Lancastrian victory. All had hung in dire suspense on his words, and not till they were ended did Grisell become conscious that her mother was sitting like a stone, with fixed, glassy eyes and dropped lip, in the high-backed chair, quite senseless, and breathing strangely.

They took her up and carried her upstairs, as one who had received her death stroke as surely as had her husband and son on the slopes between Sendal and Wakefield.

Grisell and Thora did their utmost, but without reviving her, and they watched by her, hardly con-

scious of anything else, as they tried their simple, ineffective remedies one after another, with no thought or possibility of sending for further help, since the roads would be impassable in the long January night, and besides, the Lancastrians might make them doubly perilous. Moreover, this dumb paralysis was accepted as past cure, and needing not the doctor but the priest. Before the first streak of dawn on that tardy, northern morning, Ridley's ponderous step came up the stair, into the feeble light of the rush candle which the watchers tried to shelter from the draughts.

The sad question and answer of 'No change' passed, and then Ridley, his gruff voice unnecessarily hushed, said, 'Featherstone would speak with you, lady. He would know whether it be your pleasure to keep him in your service

to hold out the Tower, or whether he is free to depart.'

'Mine !' said Grisell bewildered.

'Yea !' exclaimed Ridley. 'You are Lady of Whitburn !'

'Ah ! It is true,' exclaimed Grisell, clasping her hands. 'Woe is me that it should be so ! And oh ! Cuthbert ! my husband, if he lives, is a Queen's man ! What can I do ?'

'If it were of any boot I would say hold out the Tower. He deserves no better after the scurvy way he treated you,' said Cuthbert grimly. 'He may be dead, too, though Harry fears he was but stunned.'

'But oh !' cried Grisell, as if she saw one gleam of light, 'did not I hear something of his trying to save my brother and Lord Edmund ?'

‘You had best come down and hear,’ said Ridley. ‘Featherstone cannot go till he has spoken with you, and he ought to depart betimes, lest the Gilsland folk and all the rest of them be ravening on their way back.’

Grisell looked at her mother, who lay in the same state, entirely past her reach. The hard, stern woman, who had seemed to have no affection to bestow on her daughter, had been entirely broken down and crushed by the loss of her sons and husband.

Probably neither had realised that by forcing Grisell on young Copeland they might be giving their Tower to their enemy.

She went down to the hall, where Harry Featherstone, whose night had done him more good than hers had, came to meet her, looking

much freshened, and with a bandage over his forehead. He bent low before her, and offered her his services, but, as he told her, he and Ridley had been talking it over, and they thought it vain to try to hold out the Tower, even if any stout men did straggle back from the battle, for the country round was chiefly Lancastrian, and it would be scarcely possible to get provisions, or to be relieved. Moreover, the Gilsland branch of the family, who would be the male heirs, were on the side of the King and Queen, and might drive her out if she resisted. Thus there seemed no occasion for the squire to remain, and he hoped to reach his own family, and save himself from the risk of being captured.

‘No, sir, we do not need you,’ said Grisell. ‘If Sir Leonard Copeland lives and claims this Tower, there is no choice save to yield it to him. I would

not delay you in seeking your own safety, but only thank you for your true service to my lord and father.'

She held out her hand, which Featherstone kissed on his knee.

His horse was terribly jaded, and he thought he could make his way more safely on foot than in the panoply of an esquire, for in this war the poorer sort were hardly touched; the attacks were chiefly made on nobles and gentlemen. So he prepared to set forth, but Grisell obtained from him what she had scarcely understood the night before, the entire history of the fall of her father and brother, and how gallantly Leonard Copeland had tried to withstand Clifford's rage.

'He did his best for them,' she said, as if it were her one drop of hope and comfort.

Ridley very decidedly hoped that Clifford's blow had freed her from her reluctant husband ; and mayhap the marriage would give her claims on the Copeland property. But Grisell somehow could not join in the wish. She could only remember the merry boy at Amesbury and the fair face she had seen sleeping in the hall, and she dwelt on Featherstone's assurance that no wound had pierced the knight, and that he would probably be little the worse for his fall against the parapet of the bridge. Use her as he might, she could not wish him dead, though it was a worthy death in defence of his old playfellow and of her own brother.

CHAPTER XVI

A NEW MASTER

In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see.

.
And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother dead.

E. B. BROWNING, *The Romaunt of the Page*.

THE Lady of Whitburn lingered from day to day, sometimes showing signs of consciousness, and of knowing her daughter, but never really reviving. At the end of a fortnight she seemed for one day somewhat better, but that night she had a fresh attack, and was so evidently dying that the priest, Sir Lucas, was sent for to bring her the last Sacrament. The passing bell rang out from the

church, and the old man, with his little server before him, came up the stair, and was received by Grisell, Thora, and one or two other servants on their knees.

Ridley was not there. For even then, while the priest was crossing the hall, a party of spearmen, with a young knight at their head, rode to the gate and demanded entrance.

The frightened porter hurried to call Master Ridley, who, instead of escorting the priest with the Host to his dying lady, had to go to the gate, where he recognised Sir Leonard Copeland, far from dead, in very different guise from that in which he had been brought to the castle before. He looked, however, awed, as he said, bending his head—

‘Is it sooth, Master Ridley? Is death beforehand with me?’

‘My old lady is *in extremis*, sir,’ replied Ridley.
‘Poor soul, she hath never spoken since she heard of my lord’s death and his son’s.’

‘The younger lad? Lives he?’ demanded Copeland. ‘Is it as I have heard?’

‘Ay, sir. The child passed away on the Eve of St. Luke. I have my lady’s orders,’ he added reluctantly, ‘to open the castle to you, as of right.’

‘It is well,’ returned Sir Leonard. Then, turning round to the twenty men who followed him, he said, ‘Men-at-arms, as you saw and heard, there is death here. Draw up here in silence. This good esquire will see that you have food and fodder for the horses. Kemp, Hardcastle,’ to his squires, ‘see that all is done with honour and respect as to the lady of the castle and mine. Aught unseemly shall be punished.’

Wherewith he dismounted, and entered the narrow little court, looking about him with a keen, critical, soldierly eye, but speaking with low, grave tones.

‘I may not tarry,’ he said to Ridley, ‘but this place, since it falls to me and mine, must be held for the King and Queen.’

‘My lady bows to your will, sir,’ returned Ridley.

Copeland continued to survey the walls and very antiquated defences, observing that there could have been few alarms there. This lasted till the rites in the sick-room were ended, and the priest came forth.

‘Sir,’ he said to Copeland, ‘you will pardon the young lady. Her mother is *in articulo mortis*, and she cannot leave her.’

‘I would not disturb her,’ said Leonard. ‘The Saints forbid that I should vex her. I come but as in duty bound to claim this Tower on behalf of King Harry, Queen Margaret, and the Prince of Wales against all traitors. I will not tarry here longer than to put it into hands who will hold it for them and for me. How say you, Sir Squire?’ he added, turning to Ridley, not discourteously.

‘We ever did hold for King Harry, sir,’ returned the old esquire.

‘Yea, but against his true friends, York and Warwick. One is cut off, ay, and his aider and defender, Salisbury, who should rather have stood by his King, has suffered a traitor’s end at Pomfret.’

‘My Lord of Salisbury! Ah! that will grieve my poor young lady,’ sighed Ridley.

‘He was a kind lord, save for his treason to the King,’ said Leonard. ‘We of his household long ago were happy enough, though strangely divided now. For the rest, till that young wolf cub, Edward of March, and his mischief-stirring cousin of Warwick be put down, this place must be held against them and theirs—whosoever bears the White Rose. Wilt do so, Master Seneschal?’

‘I hold for my lady. That is all I know,’ said Ridley, ‘and she holds herself bound to you, sir.’

‘Faithful. Ay? You will be her guardian, I see; but I must leave half a score of fellows for the defence, and will charge them that they show all respect and honour to the lady, and leave to you, as seneschal, all the household, and of all save

the wardship of the Tower, calling on you first to make oath of faith to me, and to do nought to the prejudice of King Henry, the Queen, or Prince, nor to favour the friends of York or Warwick.'

'I am willing, sir,' returned Ridley, who cared a great deal more for the house of Whitburn than for either party, whose cause he by no means understood, perhaps no more than they had hitherto done themselves. As long as he was left to protect his lady it was all he asked, and more than he expected, and the courtesy, not to say delicacy, of the young knight greatly impressed both him and the priest, though he suspected that it was a relief to Sir Leonard not to be obliged to see his bride of a few months.

The selected garrison were called in. Ridley

would rather have seen them more of the North Country yeoman type than of the regular weather-beaten men-at-arms whom wars always bred up ; but their officer was a slender, dainty-looking, pale young squire, with his arm in a sling, named Pierce Hardcastle, selected apparently because his wound rendered rest desirable. Sir Leonard reiterated his charge that all honour and respect was to be paid to the Lady of Whitburn, and that she was free to come and go as she chose, and to be obeyed in every respect, save in what regarded the defence of the Tower. He himself was going on to Monks Wearmouth, where he had a kinsman among the monks.

With an effort, just as he remounted his horse, he said to Ridley, ‘ Commend me to the lady. Tell her that I am grieved for her sorrow and to be

compelled to trouble her at such a time ; but 'tis for my Queen's service, and when these troublous times be ended, she shall hear more from me.' Turning to the priest he added, 'I have no coin to spare, but let all be done that is needed for the souls of the departed lord and lady, and I will be answerable.'

Nothing could be more courteous, but as he rode off priest and squire looked at one another, and Ridley said, 'He will untie your knot, Sir Lucas.'

'He takes kindly to castle and lands,' was the answer, with a smile ; 'they may make the lady to be swallowed.'

'I trow 'tis for his cause's sake,' replied Ridley. 'Mark you, he never once said "My lady," nor "My wife."'

'May the sweet lady come safely out of it any

way,' sighed the priest. 'She would fain give herself and her lands to the Church.'

'May be 'tis the best that is like to befall her,' said Ridley; 'but if that young featherpate only had the wit to guess it, he would find that he might seek Christendom over for a better wife.'

They were interrupted by a servant, who came hurrying down to say that my lady was even now departing, and to call Sir Lucas to the bedside.

All was over a few moments after he reached the apartment, and Grisell was left alone in her desolation. The only real, deep, mutual love had been between her and poor little Bernard; her elder brother she had barely seen; her father had been indifferent, chiefly regarding her as a damaged piece of property, a burthen to the estate; her mother had been a hard, masculine, untender

woman, only softened in her latter days by the dependence of ill health and her passion for her sickly youngest ; but on her Grisell had experienced Sister Avice's lesson that ministry to others begets and fosters love.

And now she was alone in her house, last of her household, her work for her mother over, a wife, but loathed and deserted except so far as that the tie had sanctioned the occupation of her home by a hostile garrison. Her spirit sank within her, and she bitterly felt the impoverishment of the always scanty means, which deprived her of the power of laying out sums of money on those rites which were universally deemed needful for the repose of souls snatched away in battle. It was a mercenary age among the clergy, and besides, it was the depth of a northern winter, and the

funeral rites of the Lady of Whitburn would have been poor and maimed indeed if a whole band of black Benedictine monks had not arrived from Wearmouth, saying they had been despatched at special request and charge of Sir Leonard Copeland.

CHAPTER XVII

STRANGE GUESTS

The needle, having nought to do,
Was pleased to let the magnet wheedle,
Till closer still the tempter drew,
And off at length eloped the needle.

T. MOORE.

THE nine days of mourning were spent in entire seclusion by Grisell, who went through every round of devotions prescribed or recommended by the Church, and felt relief and rest in them. She shrank when Ridley on the tenth day begged her no longer to seclude herself in the solar, but to come down to the hall and take her place as Lady of the Castle, otherwise he said

he could not answer for the conduct of Copeland's men.

‘Master Hardcastle desires it too,’ he said. ‘He is a good lad enough, but I doubt me whether his hand is strong enough over those fellows! You need not look for aught save courtesy from him! Come down, lady, or you will never have your rights.’

‘Ah, Cuthbert, what are my rights?’

‘To be mistress of your own castle,’ returned Ridley, ‘and that you will never be unless you take the upper hand. Here are all our household eating with these rogues of Copeland's, and who is to keep rule if the lady comes not?’

‘Alack, and how am I to do so?’

However, the consideration brought her to appear at the very early dinner, the first meal of

the day, which followed on the return from mass. Pierce Hardcastle met her shyly. He was a tall slender stripling, looking weak and ill, and he bowed very low as he said, 'Greet you well, lady,' and looked up for a moment as if in fear of what he might encounter. Grisell indeed was worn down with long watching and grief, and looked haggard and drawn so as to enhance all her scars and distortion of feature into more uncomeliness than her wont. She saw him shudder a little, but his lame arm and wan looks interested her kind heart. 'I fear me you are still feeling your wound, sir,' she said, in the sweet voice which was evidently a surprise to him.

'It is my plea for having been a slug-a-bed this morning,' he answered.

They sat down at the table, Grisell between

Ridley and Hardcastle, the servants and men-at-arms beyond. Porridge and broth and very small ale were the fare, and salted meat would be for supper, and as Grisell knew but too well already, her own retainers were grumbling at the voracious appetites of the men-at-arms as much as did their unwilling guests at the plainness and niggardliness of the supply.

Thora had begged for a further allowance of beer for them, or even to broach a cask of wine. 'For,' said she, 'they are none such fiends as we thought, if one knows how to take them courteously.'

'There is no need that you should have any dealings with them, Thora,' said her lady, with some displeasure; 'Master Ridley sees to their provision.'

Thora tossed up her head a little and muttered something about not being mewed out of sight and speech of all men. And when she attended her lady to the hall there certainly were glances between her and a slim young archer.

The lady's presence was certainly a restraint on the rude men-at-arms, though two or three of them seemed to her rough, reckless-looking men. After the meal all her kindly instincts were aroused to ask what she could do for the young squire, and he willingly put himself into her hands, for his hurt had become much more painful within the last day or two, as indeed it proved to be festering, and in great need of treatment.

Before the day was over the two had made friends, and Grisell had found him to be a gentle, scholarly youth, whom the defence of the Queen

had snatched from his studies into the battlefield. He told her a great deal about the good King, and his encouragement of his beloved scholars at Eton, and he spoke of Queen Margaret with an enthusiasm new to Grisell, who had only heard her reviled as the Frenchwoman. Pierce could speak with the greatest admiration, too, of his own knight, Sir Leonard, whom he viewed as the pink of chivalry, assuring Lady Copeland, as he called her, that she need never doubt for a moment of his true honour and courtesy. Grisell longed to know, but modest pride forbade her to ask, whether he knew how matters stood with her rival, Lady Eleanor Audley. Ridley, however, had no such feeling, and he reported to Grisell what he had discovered.

Young Hardcastle had only once seen the lady,

and had thought her very beautiful, as she looked from a balcony when King Henry was riding to his Parliament. Leonard Copeland, then a squire, was standing beside her, and it had been currently reported that he was to be her bridegroom. He had returned from his captivity after the battle of Northampton exceedingly downcast, but striving vehemently in the cause of Lancaster, and Hardcastle had heard that the question had been discussed whether the forced marriage had been valid, or could be dissolved; but since the bodies of Lord Whitburn and his son had been found on the ground at Wakefield, this had ceased, and it was believed that Queen Margaret had commanded Sir Leonard, on his allegiance, to go and take possession of Whitburn and its vassals in her cause.

But Pierce Hardcastle had come to Ridley's opinion, that did his knight but shut his eyes, the Lady Grisell was as good a mate as man could wish both in word and deed.

'I would fain,' said he, 'have the Lady Eleanor to look at, but this lady to dress my hurts, ay, and talk with me. Never met I woman who was so good company! She might almost be a scholar at Oxford for her wit.'

However much solace the lady might find in the courtesy of Master Hardcastle, she was not pleased to find that her hand-maiden Thora exchanged glances with the young men-at-arms; and in a few days Ridley spoke to Grisell, and assured her that mischief would ensue if the silly wench were not checked in her habit of loitering and chattering whenever she could escape from

her lady's presence in the solar, which Grisell used as her bower, only descending to the hall at meal-times.

Grisell accordingly rebuked her the next time she delayed unreasonably over a message, but the girl pouted and muttered something about young Ralph Hart helping her with the heavy pitcher up the stair.

‘It is unseemly for a maiden to linger and get help from strange soldiers,’ said Grisell.

‘No more unseemly than for the dame to be ever holding converse with their captain,’ retorted the North Country hand-maiden, free of speech and with a toss of the head.

‘Whisht, Thora! or you must take a buffet,’ said Grisell, clenching a fist unused to striking, and trying to regard chastisement as a duty. ‘You

know full well that my only speech with Master Hardcastle is as his hostess.'

Thora laughed. 'Ay, lady; I ken well what the men say. How that poor youth is spell-bound, and that you are casting your glamour over him as of old over my poor old lady and little Master Bernard.'

'For shame, Thora, to bring me such tales!' and Grisell's hand actually descended on her maiden's face, but so slight was the force that it only caused a contemptuous laugh, which so angered the young mistress as to give her energy to strike again with all her might.

'And you'd beat me,' observed her victim, roused to anger. 'You are so ill favoured yourself that you cannot bear a man to look on a fair maid!'

‘What insolence is this?’ cried Grisell, utterly amazed. ‘Go into the turret room, spin out this hank, and stay there till I call you to supper. Say your Ave, and recollect what beseems a modest maiden.’

She spoke with authority, which Thora durst not resist, and withdrew still pouting and grumbling.

Grisell was indeed young herself and inexperienced, and knew not that her wrath with the girl might be perilous to herself, while sympathy might have evoked wholesome confidence.

For the maiden, just developing into northern comeliness, was attractive enough to win the admiration of soldiers in garrison with nothing to do, and on her side their notice, their rough compliments, and even their jests, were delightful

compared with the dulness of her mistress's mourning chamber, and court enough was paid to her completely to turn her head. If there were love and gratitude lurking in the bottom of her heart towards the lady who had made a fair and skilful maiden out of the wild fisher girl, all was smothered in the first strong impulse of love for this young Ralph Hart, the first to awaken the woman out of the child.

The obstacles which Grisell, like other prudent mistresses in all times, placed in the course of this true love, did but serve to alienate the girl and place her in opposition. The creature had grown up as wild and untamed as one of the seals on the shore, and though she had had a little training and teaching of late years, it was entirely powerless when once the passion was evoked in her

by the new intercourse and rough compliments of the young archer, and she was for the time at his beck and call, regarding her lady as her tyrant and enemy. It was the old story of many a household.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITCHERY

The lady has gone to her secret bower,
The bower that was guarded by word and by spell.

SCOTT, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

‘MASTER SQUIRE,’ said the principal man-at-arms of the garrison to Pierce Hardcastle, ‘is it known to you what this laidly dame’s practices be?’

‘I know her for a dame worthy of all honour and esteem,’ returned the esquire, turning hastily round in wrath. He much disliked this man, a regular mercenary of the free lance description, a fellow of French or Alsatian birth, of middle age,

much strength, and on account of a great gash and sideways twist of his snub nose always known as Tordu, and strongly suspected that he had been sent as a sort of spy or check on Sir Leonard Copeland and on himself. The man replied with a growl :

‘ Ah ha ! Sans doubt she makes her niggard fare seem dainty cates to those under her art.’

In fact the evident pleasure young Hardcastle took in the Lady Castellane’s society, the great improvement in his wound under her treatment, and the manner in which the serfs around came to ask her aid in their maladies, had excited the suspicion of the men-at-arms. They were older men, hardened and roughened, inclined to despise his youth, and to resent the orderly discipline of the household, which under Ridley went on as before, and the murmurs of

Thora led to inquiries, answered after the exaggerated fashion of gossip.

There were outcries about provisions and wine or ale, and shouts demanding more, and when Pierce declared that he would not have the lady insulted, there was a hoarse loud laugh. He was about to order Tordu as ringleader into custody, but Ridley said to him aside, 'Best not, sir; his fellows will not lay a finger on him, and if we did so, there would be a brawl, and we might come by the worst.'

So Pierce could only say, with all the force he could, 'Bear in mind that Sir Leonard Copeland is lord here, and all discourtesy to his lady is an offence to himself, which will be visited with his wrath.'

The sneering laugh came again, and Tordu made answer, 'Ay, ay, sir; she has be-

witched you, and we'll soon have him and you free.'

Pierce was angered into flying at the man with his sword, but the other men came between, and Ridley held him back.

'You are still a maimed man, sir. To be foiled would be worse than to let it pass.'

'There, fellow, I'll spare you, so you ask pardon of me and the lady.'

Perhaps they thought they had gone too far, for there was a sulky growl that might pass for an apology, and Ridley's counsel was decided that Pierce had better not pursue the matter.

What had been said, however, alarmed him, and set him on the watch, and the next evening, when Hardcastle was walking along the cliffs beyond the castle, the lad who acted as his page

came to him, with round, wondering eyes, 'Sir,' said he, after a little hesitation, 'is it sooth that the lady spake a spell over your arm?'

'Not to my knowledge,' said Pierce smiling.

'It might be without your knowledge,' said the boy. 'They say it healed as no chirurgeon could have healed it, and by magic arts.'

'Ha! the lubbard oafs. You know better than to believe them, Dick.'

'Nay, sir, but 'tis her bower-woman and Madge, the cook's wife. Both aver that the lady hath bewitched whoever comes in her way ever since she crossed the door. She hath wrought strange things with her father, mother, and brothers. They say she bound them to her; that the little one could not brook to have her out of sight; yet she worked on him so that he was

crooked and shrivelled. Yet he wept and cried to have her ever with him, while he peaked and pined and dwindled away. And her mother, who was once a fine, stately, masterful dame, pined to mere skin and bone, and lay in lethargy ; and now she is winding her charms on you, sir !’

Pierce made an exclamation of loathing and contempt. Dick lowered his voice to a whisper of awe.

‘Nay, sir, but Le Tordu and Ned of the Bludgeon purpose to ride over to Shields to the wise, and they will deal with her when he has found the witch’s mark.’

‘The lady !’ cried Hardcastle in horror. ‘You see her what she is ! A holy woman if ever there was one ! At mass each morning.’

‘Ay, but the wench Thora told Ralph that ’tis prayers backward she says there. Thora has oft

heard her at night, and 'twas no Ave nor Credo as they say them here.'

Pierce burst out laughing. 'I should think not. They speak gibberish, and she, for I have heard her in Church, speaks words with a meaning, as her priest and nuns taught her.'

'But her face, sir. There's the Evil One's mark. One side says nay to the other.'

'The Evil One! Nay, Dick, he is none other than Sir Leonard himself. 'Twas he that all unwittingly, when a boy, fired a barrel of powder close to her and marred her countenance. You are not fool and ass enough to give credence to these tales.'

'I said not that I did, sir,' replied the page; 'but it is what the men-at-arms swear to, having drawn it from the serving-maid.'

‘The adder,’ muttered Pierce.

‘Moreover,’ continued the boy, ‘they have found out that there is a wise man witch-finder at Shields. They mean to be revenged for the scanty fare and mean providings; and they deem it will be a merry jest in this weary hold, and that Sir Leonard will be too glad to be quit of his gruesome dame to call them to account.’

It was fearful news, for Pierce well knew his own incompetence to restrain these strong and violent men. He did not know where his knight was to be found, and, if he had known, it was only too likely that these terrible intentions might be carried out before any messenger could reach him. Indeed, the belief in sorcery was universal, and no rank was exempt from the danger of the accusation. Thora’s treachery was specially perilous. All that

the young man could do was to seek counsel with Cuthbert Ridley, and even this he was obliged to do in the stable, bidding Dick keep watch outside. Ridley too had heard a spiteful whisper or two, but it had seemed too preposterous for him to attend to it. ‘You are young, Hardeastle,’ he said, with a smile, ‘or you would know that there is nothing a grumbler will not say, nor how far men’s tongues lie from their hands.’

‘Nay, but if their hands *did* begin to act, how should we save the lady? There’s nothing Tordu would not do. Could we get her away to some nunnery?’

‘There is no nunnery nearer at hand than Gateshead, and there the Prioress is a Musgrove, no friend to my lord. She might give her up, on such a charge, for holy Church is no guardian in

them. My poor bairn! That ingrate Thora too! I would fain wring her neck! Yet here are our fisher folk, who love her for her bounty.'

'Would they hide her?' asked Pierce.

'That serving-wench—would I had drowned her ere bringing her here—might turn them, and, were she tracked, I ken not who might not be scared or tortured into giving her up!'

Here Dick looked in. 'Tordu is crossing the yard,' he said.

They both became immediately absorbed in studying the condition of Featherstone's horse, which had never wholly recovered the flight from Wakefield.

After a time Ridley was able to steal away, and visit Grisell in her apartment. She came to meet him, and he read alarm, incredulous alarm, in her

face. She put her hands in his. 'Is it sooth?' she said, in a strange, awe-stricken voice.

'You have heard, then, my wench?'

'Thora speaks in a strange tone, as though evil were brewing against me. But you, and Master Hardcastle, and Sir Lucas, and the rest would never let them touch me?'

'They should only do so through my heart's blood, dear child; but mine would be soon shed, and Hardcastle is a weakly lad, whom those fellows believe to be bewitched. We must find some other way!'

'Sir Leonard would save me if he knew. Alas! the good Earl of Salisbury is dead.'

''Tis true. If we could hide you till we be rid of these men. But where?' and he made a despairing gesture.

Grisell stood stunned and dazed as the horrible prospect rose before her of being seized by these lawless men, tortured by the savage hands of the witch-finder, subjected to a cruel death, by fire, or at best by water. She pressed her hands together, feeling utterly desolate, and prayed her prayer to the God of the fatherless to save her or brace her to endure.

Presently Cuthbert exclaimed, 'Would Master Groats, the Poticary, shelter you till this is overpast? His wife is deaf and must perforce keep counsel.'

'He would! I verily believe he would,' exclaimed Grisell; 'and no suspicion would light on him. How soon can I go to him, and how?'

'If it may be, this very night,' said Ridley. 'I missed two of the rogues, and who knows whither they may have gone?'

‘Will there be time?’ said the poor girl, looking round in terror.

‘Certes. The nearest witch-finder is at Shields, and they cannot get there and back under two days. Have you jewels, lady? And hark you, trust not to Thora. She is the worst traitor of all. Ask me no more, but be ready to come down when you hear a whistle.’

That Thora could be a traitress and turn against her—the girl whom she had taught, trained, and civilised—was too much to believe. She would almost, in spite of cautions, have asked her if it were possible, and tried to explain the true character of the services that were so cruelly misinterpreted; but as she descended the dark winding stair to supper, she heard the following colloquy.

‘You will not deal hardly with her, good Ralph, dear Ralph?’

‘That thou shalt see, maid! On thy life, not a word to her.’

‘Nay, but she is a white witch! she does no evil.’

‘What! Going back on what thou saidst of her brother and her mother. Take thou heed, or they will take order with thee.’

‘Thou wilt take care of me, good Ralph. Oh! I have done it for thee.’

‘Never fear, little one; only shut thy pretty little mouth;’ and there was a sound of kissing.

‘What will they do to her?’ in a lower voice.

‘Thou wilt see! Sink or swim thou knowst. Ha! ha! She will have enough of the draught that is so free to us.’

Grisell, trembling and horror-stricken, could only

lean against the wall hoping that her beating heart did not sound loud enough to betray her, till a call from the hall put an end to the terrible whispers.

She hurried upwards lest Thora should come up and perceive how near she had been, then descended and took her seat at supper, trying to converse with Pierce as usual, but noting with terror the absence of the two soldiers.

How her evasion was to be effected she knew not. The castle keys were never delivered to her, but always to Hardcastle, and she saw him take them; but she received from Ridley a look and sign which meant that she was to be ready, and when she left the hall she made up a bundle of needments, and in it her precious books and all the jewels she had inherited. That Thora did not follow her was a boon.

CHAPTER XIX

A MARCH HARE

Yonder is a man in sight—
Yonder is a house—but where ?
No, she must not enter there.
To the caves, and to the brooks,
To the clouds of heaven she looks.

WORDSWORTH, *Feast of Brougham Castle*.

LONG, long did Grisell kneel in an agony of prayer and terror, as she seemed already to feel savage hands putting her to the ordeal.

The castle had long been quiet and dark, so far as she knew, when there was a faint sound and a low whistle. She sprang to the door and held Ridley's hand.

‘Now is the time,’ he said, under his breath; ‘the squire waits. That treacherous little baggage is safe locked into the cellar, whither I lured her to find some malvoisie for the rascaille crew. Come.’

He was without his boots, and silently led the way along the narrow passage to the postern door, where stood young Hardcastle with the keys. He let them out and crossed the court with them to the little door leading to a steep descent of the cliffs by a narrow path. Not till the sands were reached did any of the three dare to speak, and then Grisell held out her hands in thanks and farewell.

‘May I not guard you on your way, lady?’ said Pierce.

‘Best not, sir,’ returned Ridley; ‘best not know

whither she is gone. I shall be back again before I am missed or your rogues are stirring.'

'When Sir Leonard knows of their devices, lady,' said Pierce, 'then will Ridley tell him where to find you and bring you back in all honour.'

Grisell could only sigh, and try to speak her thanks to the young man, who kissed her hand, and stood watching her and Ridley as the waning moon lighted them over the glistening sands, till they sought the friendly shadows of the cliffs. And thus Grisell Dacre parted from the home of her fathers.

'Cuthbert,' she said, 'should you see Sir Leonard, let him know that if—if he would be free from any bond to me I will aid in breaking it, and ask only dowry enough to obtain entrance to a convent, while he weds the lady he loves.'

Ridley interrupted her with imprecations on the knight, and exhortations to her to hold her own, and not abandon her rights. 'If he keep the lands, he should keep the wife,' was his cry.

'His word and heart——' began Grisell.

'Folly, my wench. No question but she is bestowed on some one else. You do not want to be quit of him and be mewed in a nunnery?'

'I only crave to hide my head and not be the bane of his life.'

'Pshaw! You have seen for yourself. Once get over the first glance and you are worth the fairest dame that ever was jousting for in the lists. Send him at least a message as though it were not your will to cast him off.'

'If you will have it so, then,' said Grisell, 'tell

him that if it be his desire, I will strive to make him a true, loyal, and loving wife.'

The lost words came with a sob, and Ridley gave a little inward chuckle, as of one who suspected that the duties of the good and loving wife would not be unwillingly undertaken.

Castle-bred ladies were not much given to long walks, and though the distance was only two miles, it was a good deal for Grisell, and she plodded on wearily, to the sound of the lap of the sea and the cries of the gulls. The caverns of the rock looked very black and gloomy, and she clung to Ridley, almost expecting something to spring out on her; but all was still, and the pale eastward light began to be seen over the sea before they turned away from it to ascend to the scattered houses of the little rising town.

The bells of the convent had begun to ring for lauds, but it was only twilight when they reached the wall of Lambert's garden of herbs, where there was a little door that yielded to Ridley's push. The house was still closed, and hoar frost lay on the leaves, but Grisell proposed to hide herself in the little shed which served the purpose of tool-house and summer-house till she could make her entrance. She felt sure of a welcome, and almost constrained Cuthbert to leave her, so as to return to the Tower early enough to avert suspicion—an easier matter as the men-at-arms were given to sleeping as late as they could. He would make an errand to the Apothecary's as soon as he could, so as to bring intelligence.

There sat Grisell, looking out on the brightening sky, while the blackbirds and thrushes were

bursting into song, and sweet odours rising from the spring buds of the aromatic plants around, and a morning bell rang from the great monastery church. With that she saw the house door open, and Master Lambert in a fur cap and gown turned up with lambs'-wool came out into the garden, basket in hand, and chirp to the birds to come down and be fed.

It was pretty to see how the mavis and the merle, the sparrow, chaffinch, robin, and tit fluttered round, and Grisell waited a moment to watch them before she stepped forth and said, 'Ah! Master Groot, here is another poor bird to implore your bounty.'

'Lady Grisell,' he cried, with a start.

'Ah! not that name,' she said; 'not a word. O Master Lambert, I came by night; none have seen

me, none but good Cuthbert Ridley ken where I am. There can be no peril to you or yours if you will give shelter for a little while to a poor maid.'

'Dear lady, we will do all we can,' returned Lambert. 'Fear not. How pale you are. You have walked all night! Come and rest. None will follow. You are sore spent! Clemence shall bring you a warm drink! Condescend, dear lady,' and he made her lean on his arm, and brought her into his large living room, and placed her in the comfortable cross-legged chair with straps and cushions as a back, while he went into some back settlement to inform his wife of her visitor; and presently they brought her warm water, with some refreshing perfume, in a brass basin, and he knelt on one knee to hold it to her, while she bathed her face and hands with a sponge—a rare

luxury. She started at every sound, but Lambert assured her that she was safe, as no one ever came beyond the booth. His Clemence had no gossips, and the garden could not be overlooked. While some broth was heated for her she began to explain her peril, but he exclaimed, 'Methinks I know, lady, if it was thereanent that a great strapping Hollander fellow from your Tower came to ask me for a charm against gramarie, with hints that 'twas in high places. 'Twas enough to make one laugh to see the big lubber try to whisper hints, and shiver and shake, as he showed me a knot in his matted locks and asked if it were not the enemy's tying. I told him 'twas tied by the enemy indeed, the deadly sin of sloth, and that a stout Dutchman ought to be ashamed of himself for carrying such a head within or without. But

I scarce bethought me the impudent Schelm could have thought of you, lady.'

'Hush again. Forget the word! They are gone to Shields in search of the witch-finder, to pinch me, and probe me, and drown me, or burn me,' cried Grisell, clasping her hands. 'Oh! take me somewhere if you cannot safely hide me; I would not bring trouble on you!'

'You need not fear,' he answered. 'None will enter here but by my good-will, and I will bar the garden door lest any idle lad should pry in; but they come not here. The tortoise who crawls about in the summer fills them with too much terror for them to venture, and is better than any watch-dog. Now, let me touch your pulse. Ah! I would prescribe lying down on the bed and resting for the day.'

She complied, and Clemence took her to the upper floor, where it was the pride of the Flemish housewife to keep a guest-chamber, absolutely neat, though very little furnished, and indeed seldom or never used ; but she solicitously stroked the big bed, and signed to Grisell to lie down in the midst of pillows of down, above and below, taking off her hood, mantle, and shoes, and smoothing her down with nods and sweet smiles, so that she fell sound asleep.

When she awoke the sun was at the meridian, and she came down to the noontide meal. Master Groot was looking much entertained.

Wearmouth, he said, was in a commotion. The great Dutch Whitburn man-at-arms had come in full of the wonderful story. Not only had the grisly lady vanished, but a cross-bow

man had shot an enormous hare on the moor, a creature with one ear torn off, and a seam on its face, and Masters Hardcastle and Ridley altogether favoured the belief that it was the sorceress herself without time to change her shape. Did Mynheer Groot hold with them?

For though Dutch and Flemings were not wholly friendly at home, yet in a strange country they held together, and remembered that they were both Netherlanders, and Hannekin would fain know what thought the wise man.

‘Depend on it, there was no time for a change,’ gravely said Groot. ‘Have not Nostradamus, Albertus Magnus, and Rogerus Bacon’ (he was heaping names together as he saw Hannekin’s big gray eyes grow rounder and rounder) ‘all averred that the great Diabolus can give his

minions power to change themselves at will into hares, cats, or toads to transport themselves to the Sabbath on Walpurgs' night ?'

'You deem it in sooth,' said the Dutchman, 'for know you that the parish priest swears, and so do the more part of the villein fisher folk, that there's no sorcery in the matter, but that she is a true and holy maid, with no powers save what the Saints had given her, and that her cures were by skill. Yet such was scarce like to a mere Jungvrow.'

It went sorely against Master Lambert's feelings, as well as somewhat against his conscience, to encourage the notion of the death of his guest as a hare, though it ensured her safety and prevented a search. He replied that her skill certainly was uncommon in a Jungvrow, beyond

nature, no doubt, and if they were unholy, it was well that the arblastier had made a riddance of her.

‘By the same token,’ added Hannekin, ‘the elf lock came out of my hair this very morn, I having, as you bade me, combed it each morn with the horse’s currycomb.’

Proof positive, as Lambert was glad to allow him to believe. And the next day all Sunderland and the two Wearmouths believed that the dead hare had shrieked in a human voice on being thrown on a fire, and had actually shown the hands and feet of a woman before it was consumed.

It was all the safer for Grisell as long as she was not recognised, and of this there was little danger. She was scarcely known in Wearmouth, and could go to mass at the Abbey Church in a

deep black hood and veil. Master Lambert sometimes received pilgrims from his own country on their way to English shrines, and she could easily pass for one of these if her presence were perceived, but except to mass in very early morning, she never went beyond the garden, where the spring beauty was enjoyment to her in the midst of her loneliness and entire doubt as to her future.

It was a grand old church, too, with low-browed arches, reminding her of the dear old chapel of Wilton, and with a lofty though undecorated square tower, entered by an archway adorned with curious twisted snakes with long beaks, stretching over and under one another.

The low heavy columns, the round circles, and the small windows, casting a very dim religious light, gave Grisell a sense of being in the atmo-

sphere of that best beloved place, Wilton Abbey. She longed after Sister Avice's wisdom and tenderness, and wondered whether her lands would purchase from her knight, power to return thither with dower enough to satisfy the demands of the Proctor. It was a hope that seemed like an inlet of light in her loneliness, when no one was faithful save Cuthbert Ridley, and she felt cut to the heart above all by Thora's defection and cruel accusations, not knowing that half was owing to the intoxication of love, and the other half to a gossiping tongue.

CHAPTER XX

A BLIGHT ON THE WHITE ROSE

Witness Aire's unhappy water
Where the ruthless Clifford fell,
And when Wharfe ran red with slaughter
On the day of Towton's field.
Gathering in its guilty flood
The carnage and the ill spilt blood
That forty thousand lives could yield.
SOUTHEY, *Funeral Song of Princess Charlotte.*

GRISELL from the first took her part in the Apothecary's household. Occupation was a boon to her, and she not only spun and made lace with Clemence, but showed her new patterns learned in old days at Wilton ; and still more did she enjoy assisting the master of the house in making

his compounds, learning new nostrums herself, and imparting others to him, showing a delicacy of finger which the old Fleming could not emulate. In the fabrication of perfumes for the pouncet box, and sweetmeats prepared with honey and sugar, she proved to have a dainty hand, so that Lambert, who would not touch her jewels, declared that she was fully earning her maintenance by the assistance that she gave to him.

They were not molested by the war, which was decidedly a war of battles, not of sieges, but they heard far more of tidings than were wont to reach Whitburn Tower. They knew of the advance of Edward to London; and the terrible battle of Towton begun, was fought out while the snow fell far from bloodless, on Palm Sunday; and while the choir boys had been singing their *Gloria, laus et*

honor in the gallery over the church door, shivering a little at the untimely blast, there had been grim and awful work, when for miles around the Wharfe and Aire the snow lay mixed with blood. That the Yorkists had gained was known, and that the Queen and Prince had fled ; but nothing was heard of the fate of individuals, and Master Lambert was much occupied with tidings from Bruges, whence information came, in a messenger sent by a notary that his uncle, an old miser, whose harsh displeasure at his marriage had driven him forth, was just dead, leaving him heir to a fairly prosperous business and a house in the city.

To return thither was of course Lambert's intention as soon as he could dispose of his English property. He entreated Grisell to accompany him and Clemence, assuring her that at the chief city

of so great a prince as Duke Philip of Burgundy, she would have a better hope of hearing tidings of her husband than in a remote town like Sunderland; and that if she still wished to dispose of her jewels she would have a far better chance of so doing. He was arguing the point with her, when there was a voice in the stall outside which made Grisell start, and Lambert, going out, brought in Cuthbert Ridley, staggering under the weight of his best suit of armour, and with a bundle and bag under his mantle.

Grisell sprang up eagerly to meet him, but as she put her hands into his he looked sorrowfully at her, and she asked under her breath, ‘Ah! Sir Leonard——?’

‘No tidings of the recreant,’ growled Ridley, ‘but ill tidings for both of you. The Daeres of

Gilsland are on us, claiming your castle and lands as male heirs to your father.'

'Do they know that I live?' asked Grisell, 'or'—unable to control a little laugh—'do they deem that I was slain in the shape of a hare?'

'Or better than that,' put in Lambert; 'they have it now in the wharves that the corpse of the hare took the shape and hands of a woman when in the hall.'

'I ken not, the long-tongued rogues,' said Ridley; 'but if my young lady were standing living and life-like before them as, thank St. Hilda, I see her now, they would claim it all the more as male heirs, and this new King Edward has granted old Sir John seisin, being that she is the wife of one of King Henry's men!'

'Are they there? How did you escape?'

‘I got timely notice,’ said Cuthbert. ‘Twenty strong halted over the night at Yeoman Kester’s farm on Heather Gill—a fellow that would do anything for me since we fought side by side on the day of the Herrings. So he sends out his two grandsons to tell me what they were after, while they were drinking his good ale to health of their King Edward. So forewarned, forearmed. We have left them empty walls, get in as they can or may—unless that traitor Tordu chooses to stay and make terms with them.’

‘Master Hardcastle! Would he fly? Surely not!’ asked Grisell.

‘Master Hardcastle, with Dutch Hannekin and some of the better sort, went off long since to join their knight’s banner, and the Saints know how the poor young lad sped in all the bloody work

they have had. For my part, I felt not bound to hold out the castle against my old lord's side, when there was no saving it for you, so I put what belonged to me together, and took poor old Roan, and my young lady's pony, and made my way hither, no one letting me. I doubt me much, lady, that there is little hope of winning back your lands, whatever side may be uppermost, yet there be true hearts among our villeins, who say they will never pay dues to any save their lord's daughter.'

'Then I am landless and homeless,' sighed Grisell.

'The greater cause that you should make your home with us, lady,' returned Lambert Groot; and he went on to lay before Ridley the state of the case, and his own plans. House and business,

possibly a seat in the city council, were waiting for him at Bruges, and the vessel from Ostend which had continually brought him supplies for his traffic was daily expected. He intended, so soon as she had made up her cargo of wool, to return in her to his native country, and he was urgent that the Lady Grisell should go with him, representing that all the changes of fortune in the convulsed kingdom of England were sure to be quickly known there, and that she was as near the centre of action in Flanders as in Durham, besides that she would be out of reach of any enemies who might disbelieve the hare transformation. After learning the fate of her castle, Grisell much inclined to the proposal which kept her with those whom she had learnt to trust and love, and she knew that she need be no burthen to them,

since she had profitable skill in their own craft, and besides she had her jewels. Ridley, moreover, gave her hopes of a certain portion of her dues on the herring-boats and the wool.

‘Will not you come with the lady, sir?’ asked Lambert.

‘Oh, come!’ cried Grisell.

‘Nay, a squire of dames hath scarce been heard of in a Poticar’s shop,’ said Ridley, and there was an irresistible laugh at the rugged old gentleman so terming himself; but as Lambert and Grisell were both about to speak he went on, ‘I can serve her better elsewhere. I am going first to my home at Willimoteswick. I have not seen it these forty year, and whether my brother or my nephew make me welcome or no, I shall have seen the old moors and mosses. Then methought

I would come hither, or to some of the towns about, and see how it fares with the old Tower and the folk; and if they be as good as their word, and keep their dues for my lady, I could gather them, and take or bring them to her, with any other matter which might concern her nearly.'

This was thoroughly approved by Grisell's little council, and Lambert undertook to make known to the good esquire the best means of communication, whether in person, or by the transmission of payments, since all the eastern ports of England had connections with Dutch and Flemish traffic, which made the payment of monies possible.

Grisell meantime was asking for Thora. Her uncle, Ridley said, had come up, laid hands on her, and soundly scourged her for her foul practices. He had dragged her home, and when Ralph

Hart had come after her, had threatened him with a quarter-staff, called out a mob of fishermen, and finally had brought him to Sir Lucas, who married them willy-nilly. He was the runaway son of a currier in York, and had taken her *en croupe*, and ridden off to his parents at the sign of the Hart, to bespeak their favour.

Grisell grieved deeply over Thora's ingratitude to her, and the two elder men foreboded no favourable reception for the pair, and hoped that Thora would sup sorrow.

Ridley spent the night at the sign of the Green Serpent, and before he set out for Willimoteswick, he confided to Master Groot a bag containing a silver cup or two, and a variety of coins, mostly French. They were, he said, spoils of his wars under King Harry the Fifth and the two Lord

Salisburys, which he had never had occasion to spend, and he desired that they might be laid out on the Lady Grisell in case of need, leaving her to think they were the dues from her faithful tenantry. To the Hausvrow Clemence it was a great grief to leave the peaceful home of her married life, and go among kindred who had shown their scorn in neglect and cold looks ; but she kept a cheerful face for her husband, and only shed tears over the budding roses and other plants she had to leave ; and she made her guest understand how great a comfort and solace was her company.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WOUNDED KNIGHT

Belted Will Howard is marching here,
And hot Lord Dacre with many a spear.
SCOTT, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

‘MASTER GROOT, a word with you.’ A lay brother in the coarse, dark robe of St. Benedict was standing in the booth of the Green Serpent.

Groot knew him for Brother Christopher of Monks Wearmouth, and touched his brow in recognition.

‘Have you here any balsam fit for a plaguy shot with an arquebus, the like of which our poor peaceful house never looked to harbour?’

‘For whom is it needed, good brother?’

‘Best not ask,’ said Brother Christopher, who was, however, an inveterate gossip, and went on in reply to Lambert’s question as to the place of the wound. ‘In the shoulder is the worst, the bullet wound where the Brother Infirmerer has poured in hot oil. St. Bede! How the poor knight howled, though he tried to stop it, and brought it down to moaning. His leg is broken beside, but we could deal with that. His horse went down with him, you see, when he was overtaken and shot down by the Gilsland folk.’

‘The Gilsland folk!’

‘Even so, poor lad; and he was only on his way to see after his own, or his wife’s, since all the Whitburn sons are at an end, and the Tower gone to the spindle side. They say, too, that the damsel

he wedded perforce was given to magic, and fled in form of a hare. But be that as it will, young Copeland—St. Bede, pardon me! What have I let out?’

‘Reck not of that, brother. The tale is all over the town. How of Copeland?’

‘As I said even now, he was on his way to the Tower, when the Dacres—Will and Harry—fell on him, and left him for dead; but by the Saints’ good providence, his squire and groom put him on a horse, and brought him to our Abbey at night, knowing that he is kin to our Sub-Prior. And there he lies, whether for life or death only Heaven knows, but for death it will be if only King Edward gets a scent of him; so hold your peace, Master Groats, as to who it be, as you live, or as you would not have his blood on you.’

‘Master Groats’ promised silence, and gave numerous directions as to the application of his medicaments, and Brother Kit took his leave, reiterating assurances that Sir Leonard’s life depended on his secrecy.

Whatever was said in the booth was plainly audible in the inner room. Grisell and Clemence were packing linen, and the little shutter of the wooden partition was open. Thus Lambert found Grisell standing with clasped hands, and a face of intense attention and suspense.

‘You have heard, lady,’ he said.

‘Oh, yea, yea! Alas, poor Leonard!’ she cried.
‘The Saints grant him recovery.’

‘Methought you would be glad to hear you were like to be free from such a yoke. Were you rid of him, you, of a Yorkist house, might win

back your lands, above all, since, as you once told me, you were a playmate of the King's sister.'

'Ah! dear master, speak not so! Think of him! treacherously wounded, and lying moaning. That gruesome oil! Oh! my poor Leonard!' and she burst into tears. 'So fair, and comely, and young, thus stricken down!'

'Bah!' exclaimed Lambert. 'Such are women! One would think she loved him, who flouted her!'

'I cannot brook the thought of his lying there in sore pain and dolour, he who has had so sad a life, baulked of his true love.'

Master Lambert could only hold up his hands at the perversity of womankind, and declare to his Clemence that he verily believed that had the knight been a true and devoted Tristram himself,

ever at her feet, the lady could not have been so sore troubled.

The next day brought Brother Kit back with an earnest request from the Infirmarer and the Sub-Prior that 'Master Groats' would come to the monastery, and give them the benefit of his advice on the wounds and the fever which was setting in, since gunshot wounds were beyond the scope of the monastic surgery.

To refuse would not have been possible, even without the earnest entreaty of Grisell; and Lambert, who had that medical instinct which no training can supply, went on his way with the lay brother.

He came back after many hours, sorely perturbed by the request that had been made to him. Sir Leonard, he said, was indeed sick nigh unto

death, grievously hurt, and distraught by the fever, or it might be by the blow on his head in the fall with his horse, which seemed to have kicked him ; but there was no reason that with good guidance and rest he should not recover. But, on the other hand, King Edward was known to be on his progress to Durham, and he was understood to be especially virulent against Sir Leonard Copeland, under the impression that the young knight had assisted in Clifford's slaughter of his brother Edmund of Rutland. It was true that a monastery was a sanctuary, but if all that was reported of Edward Plantagenet were true, he might, if he tracked Copeland to the Abbey, insist on his being yielded up, or might make Abbot and monks suffer severely for the protection given to his enemy ; and there was much fear that the Dacres might be on

the scent. The Abbot and Father Copeland were anxious to be able to answer that Sir Leonard was not within their precincts, and, having heard that Master Groats was about to sail for Flanders, the Sub-Prior made the entreaty that his nephew might thus be conveyed to the Low Countries, where the fugitives of each party in turn found a refuge. Father Copeland promised to be at charges, and, in truth, the scheme was the best hope for Leonard's chances of life. Master Groot had hesitated, seeing various difficulties in the way of such a charge, and being by no means disposed towards Lady Grisell's unwilling husband, as such, though in a professional capacity he was interested in his treatment of his patient, and was likewise touched by the good mien of the fine, handsome, straight-limbed young man, who

was lying unconscious on his pallet in a narrow cell.

He had replied that he would answer the next day, when he had consulted his wife and the ship-master, whose consent was needful; and there was of course another, whom he did not mention.

As he told all the colour rose in Grisell's face, rosy on one side, purple, alas, on the other. 'O master, good master, you will, you will!'

'Is it your pleasure, then, mistress? I should have held that the kindness to you would be to rid you of him.'

'No, no, no! You are mocking me! You know too well what I think! Is not this my best hope of making him know me, and becoming his true and—and——'

A sob cut her short, but she cried, 'I will be at all the pains and all the cost, if only you will consent, dear Master Lambert, good Master Groot.'

'Ah, would I knew what is well for her!'

said Lambert, turning to his wife, and making rapid signs with face and fingers in their mutual language, but Grisell burst in—

'Good for her,' cried she. 'Can it be good for a wife to leave her husband to be slain by the cruel men of York and Warwick, him who strove to save the young Lord Edmund? Master, you will suffer no such foul wrong. O master, if you did, I would stay behind, in some poor hovel on the shore, where none would track him, and tend him there. I will! I vow it to St. Mary.'

'Hush, hush, lady! Cease this strange passion.

You could not be more moved if he were the tenderest spouse who ever breathed.'

'But you will have pity, sir. You will aid us. You will save us. Give him the chance for life.'

'What say you, housewife?' said Groot, turning to the silent Clemence, whom his signs and their looks had made to perceive the point at issue. Her reply was to seize Grisell's two hands, kiss them fervently, clasp both together, and utter in her deaf voice two Flemish words, '*Goot Vrow.*' Grisell eagerly embraced her in tears.

'We have still to see what Skipper Vrowst says. He may not choose to meddle with English outlaws.'

'If you cannot win him to take my knight, he will not take me,' said Grisell.

There was no more to be said except something about the waywardness of the affections of women

and dogs ; but Master Groot was not ill-pleased at the bottom that both the females of the household took part against him, and they had a merry supper that night, amid the chests in which their domestic apparatus and stock-in-trade were packed, with the dried lizard, who passed for a crocodile, sitting on the settle as if he were one of the company. Grisell's spirits rose with an undefined hope that, like Sir Gawaine's bride, or her own namesake, Griselda the patient, she should at last win her lord's love ; and, deprived as she was of all her own relatives, there arose strongly within her the affection that, ten long years ago, had made her haunt the footsteps of the boy at Amesbury Manor.

Groot was made to promise to say not a word of her presence in his family. He was out all

day, while Clemence worked hard at her *déménagement*, and only with scruples accepted the assistance of her guest, who was glad to work away her anxiety in the folding of curtains and stuffing of mails.

At last Lambert returned, having been backwards and forwards many times between the *Vrouw Gudule* and the Abbey, for Skipper Vrowst drove a hard bargain, and made the most of the inconvenience and danger of getting into ill odour with the authorities ; and, however anxious Father Copeland might be to save his nephew, Abbot and bursar demurred at gratifying extortion, above all when the King might at any time be squeezing them for contributions hard to come by.

However, it had been finally fixed that a boat should put in to the Abbey steps to receive the

fleeces of the sheep-shearing of the home grange, and that, rolled in one of these fleeces, the wounded knight should be brought on board the *Vrouw Gudule*, where Groot and the women would await him, their freight being already embarked, and all ready to weigh anchor.

The chief danger was in a King's officer coming on board to weigh the fleeces, and obtain the toll on them. But Sunderland either had no King, or had two just at that time, and Father Copeland handed Master Groot a sum which might bribe one or both; while it was to the interest of the captain to make off without being overhauled by either.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CITY OF BRIDGES

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
There in the naked hall, propping his head,
And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.
Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon.

TENNYSON, *Enid*.

THE transit was happily effected, and closely hidden in wool, Leonard Copeland was lifted out the boat, more than half unconscious, and afterwards transferred to the vessel, and placed in wrappings as softly and securely as Grisell and Clemence could arrange before King Edward's men came to exact their poundage on the freight, but happily did not concern themselves about the sick man.

He might almost be congratulated on his semi-insensibility, for though he suffered, he would not retain the recollection of his suffering, and the voyage was very miserable to every one, though the weather was far from unfavourable, as the captain declared. Grisell indeed was so entirely taken up with ministering to her knight that she seemed impervious to sickness or discomfort. It was a great relief to enter on the smooth waters of the great canal from Ostend, and Lambert stood on the deck recognising old landmarks, and pointing them out with the joy of homecoming to Clemence, who perhaps felt less delight, since the joys of her life had only begun when she turned her back on her unkind kinsfolk.

Nor did her face light up as his did while he pointed out to Grisell the beauteous belfry,

rising on high above the many-peaked gables, though she did smile when a long-billed, long-legged stork flapped his wings overhead, and her husband signed that it was in greeting. The greeting that delighted him she could not hear, the sweet chimes from that same tower, which floated down the stream, when he doffed his cap, crossed himself, and clasped his hands in devout thanksgiving.

It was a wonderful scene of bustle ; where vessels of all kinds thronged together were drawn up to the wharf, the beautiful tall painted ships of Venice and Genoa pre-eminent among the stoutly-built Netherlanders and the English traders. Shouts in all languages were heard, and Grisell looked round in wonder and bewilderment as to how the helpless and precious charge on the deck was ever to be safely landed.

Lambert, however, was truly at home and equal to the occasion. He secured some of the men who came round the vessel in barges clamouring for employment, and—Grisell scarce knew how—Leonard on his bed was lifted down, and laid in the bottom of the barge. The big bundles and cases were committed to the care of another barge, to follow close after theirs, and on they went under, one after another, the numerous high, peaked bridges to which Bruges owes its name, while tall sharp-gabled houses, walls, or sometimes pleasant green gardens, bounded the margins, with a narrow footway between. The houses had often pavement leading by stone steps to the river, and stone steps up to the door, which was under the deep projecting eaves running along the front of the house—a stoop, as the Low Countries

called it. At one of these—not one of the largest or handsomest, but far superior to the old home at Sunderland—hung the large handsome painted and gilded sign of the same serpent which Grisell had learnt to know so well; and here the barge hove to, while two servants, the man in a brown belted jerkin, the old woman in a narrow, tight, white hood, came out on the steps with outstretched hands.

‘Mein Herr, my dear Master Lambert. Oh, joy! Greet thee well. Thanks to our Lady that I have lived to see this day,’ was the old woman’s cry.

‘Greet thee well, dear old Mother Abra. Greet thee, trusty Anton. You had my message? Have you a bed and chamber ready for this gentleman?’

Such was Lambert’s hasty though still cordial

greeting, as he gave his hand to the man-servant, his cheek to his old nurse, who was mother to Anton. Clemence in her gentle dumb show shared the welcome, and directed as Leonard was carried up an outside stone stair to a guest-chamber, and deposited in a stately bed with fresh, cool, lace-bordered, lavender-scented sheets, and Grisell put between his lips a spoonful of the cordial with which Lambert had supplied her.

More distinctly than before he murmured, 'Thanks, sweet Eleanor.'

The move in the open air had partly revived him, partly made him feverish, and he continued to murmur complacently his thanks to Eleanor for 'tending her wounded knight,' little knowing whom he wounded by his thanks.

On one point this decided Grisell. She looked

up at Lambert, and when he used her title of 'Lady,' in begging her to leave old Mother Abra in charge and to come down to supper, she made a gesture of silence, and as she came down the broad stair—a refinement scarce known in England—she entreated him to let her be Grisell still.

'Unless he accept me as his wife I will never bear his name,' she said.

'Nay, madame, you are Lady of Whitburn by right.'

'By right, may be, but not in fact, nor could I be known as mine own self without cumbering him with my claims. No, let me alone to be Grisell as ever before, an English orphan, bower-woman to Vrow Clemence if she will have me.'

Clemence would not consent to treat her as bower-woman, and it was agreed that she should

remain as one of the many orphans made by the civil war in England, without precise definition of her rank, and be only called by her Christian name. She was astonished at the status of Master Groot, the size and furniture of the house, and the servants who awaited him; all so unlike his little English establishment, for the refinements and even luxuries were not only far beyond those of Whitburn, but almost beyond all that she had seen even in the households of the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick. He had indeed been bred to all this, for the burghers of Bruges were some of the most prosperous of all the rich citizens of Flanders in the golden days of the Dukes of Burgundy; and he had left it all for the sake of his Clemence, but without forfeiting his place in his Guild, or his right to his inheritance.

He was, however, far from being a rich man, on a level with the great merchants, though he had succeeded to a modest, not unprosperous trade in spices, drugs, condiments and other delicacies.

He fetched a skilful Jewish physician to visit Sir Leonard Copeland, but there was no great difference in the young man's condition for many days. Grisell nursed him indefatigably, sitting by him so as to hear the sweet bells chime again and again, and the storks clatter on the roofs at sunrise.

Still, whenever her hand brought him some relief, or she held drink to his lips, his words and thanks were for Eleanor, and more and more did the sense sink down upon her like lead that she must give him up to Eleanor.

Yes, it was like lead, for, as she watched his

face on the pillow her love went out to him. It might have done so even had he been disfigured like herself; but his was a beautiful countenance of noble outlines, and she felt a certain pride in it as hers, while she longed to see it light up with reason, and glow once more with health. Then she thought she could rejoice, even if there were no look of love for her.

The eyes did turn towards her again with the mind looking out of them, and he knew her for the nurse on whom he depended for comfort and relief. He thanked her courteously, so that she felt a thrill of pleasure every time. He even learnt her name of Grisell, and once he asked whether she were not English, to which she replied simply that she was; and on a further question she said that she had been at Sunderland with Master Groot,

and that she had lost her home in the course of the wars.

There for some time it rested—rested at least with the knight. But with the lady there was far from rest, for every hour she was watching for some favourable token which might draw them nearer, and give opportunity for making herself known. Nearer they certainly drew, for he often smiled at her. He liked her to wait on him, and to beguile the weariness of his recovery by singing to him, telling some of her store of tales, or reading to him, for books were more plentiful at Bruges than at Sunderland, and there were even whispers of a wonderful mode of multiplying them far more quickly than by the scrivener's hand.

How her heart beat every time she thus

ministered to him, or heard his voice call to her, but it was all, as she could plainly see, just as he would have spoken to Clemence, if she could have heard him, and he evidently thought her likewise of burgher quality, and much of the same age as the Vrow Groot. Indeed, the long toil and wear of the past months had made her thin and haggard, and the traces of her disaster were all the more apparent, so that no one would have guessed her years to be eighteen.

She had taken her wedding-ring from her finger, and wore it on a chain, within her kirtle, so as to excite no inquiry. But many a night, ere she lay down, she looked at it, and even kissed it, as she asked herself whether her knight would ever bid her wear it. Until he did so her finger should never again be encircled by it.

Meantime she scarcely ever went beyond the nearest church and the garden, which amply compensated Clemence for that which she had left at Sunderland. Indeed, that had been as close an imitation of this one as Lambert could contrive in a colder climate with smaller means. Here was a fountain trellised over by a framework rich in roses and our lady's bower; here were pinks, gillyflowers, pansies, lavender, and the new snow-ball shrub recently produced at Gueldres, and a little bush shown with great pride by Anton, the snow-white rose grown in King Réne's garden of Provence.

These served as borders to the green walks dividing the beds of useful vegetables and fruits and aromatic herbs which the Groots had long been in the habit of collecting from all parts and experimenting on. Much did Lambert

rejoice to find himself among the familiar plants he had often needed and could not procure in England, and for some of which he had a real individual love. The big improved distillery and all the jars and bottles of his youth were a joy to him, almost as much as the old friends who accepted him again after a long 'wander-year.'

Clemence had her place too, but she shrank from the society she could not share, and while most of the burghers' wives spent the summer evening sitting spinning or knitting on the steps of the stoop, conversing with their gossips, she preferred to take her distaff or needle among the roses, sometimes tending them, sometimes beguiling Grisell to come and take the air in company with her, for they understood one another's mute language; and

when Lambert Groot was with his old friends they sufficed for one another—so far as Grisell's anxious heart could find solace, and perhaps in none so much as the gentle matron who could caress but could not talk.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CANKERED OAK GALL

That Walter was no fool, though that him list
To change his wif, for it was for the best ;
For she is fairer, so they demen all,
Than his Griselde, and more tendre of age.

CHAUCER, *The Clerke's Tale*.

It was on an early autumn evening when the belfry stood out beautiful against the sunset sky, and the storks with their young fledgelings were wheeling homewards to their nest on the roof, that Leonard was lying on the deep oriel window of the guest-chamber, and Grisell sat opposite to him with a lace pillow on her lap, weaving after the pattern of Wilton for a Church vestment.

‘The storks fly home,’ he said. ‘I marvel whether we have still a home in England, or ever shall have one!’

‘I heard tell that the new King of France is friendly to the Queen and her son,’ said Grisell.

‘He is near of kin to them, but he must keep terms with this old Duke who sheltered him so long. Still, when he is firm fixed on his throne he may yet bring home our brave young Prince and set the blessed King on his throne once more.’

‘Ah! You love the King.’

‘I revere him as a saint, and feel as though I drew my sword in a holy cause when I fight for him,’ said Leonard, raising himself with glittering eyes.

‘And the Queen?’

‘Queen Margaret! Ah! by my troth she is a dame who makes swords fly out of their scabbards by her brave stirring words and her noble mien. Her bright eyes and undaunted courage fire each man’s heart in her cause till there is nothing he would not do or dare, ay, or give up for her, and those she loves better than herself, her husband, and her son.’

‘You have done so,’ faltered Grisell.

‘Ah! have I not? Mistress, I would that you bore any other name. You mind me of the bane and grief of my life.’

‘Verily?’ uttered Grisell with some difficulty.

‘Yea! Tell me, mistress, have I ever, when my brains were astray, uttered any name?’

‘By times, even so!’ she confessed.

‘I thought so ! I deemed at times that she was here ! I have never told you of the deed that marred my life.’

‘Nay,’ she said, letting her bobbins fall though she drooped her head, not daring to look him in the face.

‘I was a mere lad, a page in the Earl of Salisbury’s house. A good man was he, but the iealousies and hatreds of the nobles had begun long ago, and the good King hoped, as he ever noped, to compose them. So he brought about a compact between my father and the Dacre of Whitburn for a marriage between their children, and caused us both to be bred up in the Lady of Salisbury’s household, meaning, I trow, that we should enter into solemn contract when we were of less tender age ; but there never was betrothal ;

and before any fit time for it had come, I had the mishap to have the maid close to me—she was ever besetting and running after me—when by some prank, unhappily of mine, a barrel of gunpowder blew up and wellnigh tore her to pieces. My father came, and her mother, an unnurtured, uncouth woman, who would have forced me to wed her on the spot; but my father would not hear of it, more especially as there were then two male heirs, so that I should not have gained her grim old Tower and bare moorlands. All held that I was not bound to her; the Queen herself owned it, and that whatever the damsel might be, the mother was a mere northern she-bear, whose child none would wish to wed, and of the White Rose besides. So the King had me to his school at Eton, and then I was a squire of my Lord of

Somerset, and there I saw my fairest Eleanor Audley. The Queen and the Duke of Somerset—rest his soul—would have had us wedded. On the love day, when all walked together to St. Paul's, and the King hoped all was peace, we spoke our vows to one another in the garden of Westminster. She gave me this rook, I gave her the jewel of my cap; I read her true love in her eyes, like our limpid northern brooks. Oh! she was fair, fairer than yonder star in the sunset, but her father, the Lord Audley, was absent, and we could go no farther; and therewith came the Queen's summons to her liegemen to come and arrest Salisbury at Bloreheath. There never was rest again, as you know. My father was slain at Northampton, I yielded me to young Falconberg; but I found the Yorkists had set headsmen to

work as though we had been traitors, and I was begging for a priest to hear my shrift, when who should come into the foul, wretched barn where we lay awaiting the rope, but old Dacre of Whitburn. He had craved me from the Duke of York, it seems, and gained my life on what condition he did not tell me, but he bound my feet beneath my horse, and thus bore me out of the camp for all the first day. Then, I own he let me ride as became a knight, on my word of honour not to escape; but much did I marvel whether it were revenge or ransom that he wanted; and as to ransom, all our gold had all been riding on horseback with my poor father. What he had devised I knew not nor guessed till late at night we were at his rat-hole of a Tower, where I looked for a taste of the dungeons;

but no such thing. The choice that the old robber——'

Grisell could not repress a dissentient murmur of indignation.

'Ah, well, you are from Sunderland, and may know better of him. But any way the choice he left me was the halter that dangled from the roof and his grisly daughter!'

'Did you see her?' Grisell contrived to ask.

'I thank the Saints, no. To hear of her was enow. They say she has a face like a cankered oak gall or a rotten apple lying cracked on the ground among the wasps. Mayhap though you have seen her.'

Grisell could truly say, in a half-choked voice, 'Never since she was a child,' for no mirror had come in her way since she was at Warwick House.

She was upborne by the thought that it would be a relief to him not to see anything like a rotten apple. He went on—

‘My first answer and first thought was rather death—and of my word to my Eleanor. Ah! you marvel to see me here now. I felt as though nothing would make me a recreant to her. Her sweet smile and shining eyes rose up before me, and half the night I dreamt of them, and knew that I would rather die than be given to another and be false to them. Ah! but you will deem me a recreant. With the waking hours I thought of my King and Queen. My elder brother died with Lord Shrewsbury in Gascony, and after me the next heir is a devoted Yorkist who would turn my castle, the key of Cleveland, against the Queen. I knew the defeat would make faithful swords

more than ever needful to her, and that it was my bounden duty, if it were possible, to save my life, my sword, and my lands for her. Mistress, you are a good woman. Did I act as a coward?’

‘You offered up yourself,’ said Grisell, looking up.

‘So it was! I gave my consent, on condition that I should be free at once. We were wedded in the gloom—ere sunrise—a thunderstorm coming up, which so darkened the church that if she had been a peerless beauty, fair as Cressid herself, I could not have seen her, and even had she been beauty itself, nought can to me be such as my Eleanor. So I was free to gallop off through the storm for Wearmouth when the rite was over, and none pursued me, for old Whitburn was a man of his word. Mine uncle held the marriage

as nought, but next I made for the Queen at Durham, and, if aught could comfort my spirit, it was her thanks, and assurances that it would cost nothing but the dispensation of the Pope to set me free. So said Dr. Morton, her chaplain, one of the most learned men in England. I told him all, and he declared that no wedlock was valid without the heartfelt consent of each party.'

'Said he so?' Poor Grisell could not repress the inquiry.

'Yea, and that though no actual troth had passed between me and Lord Audley's daughter, yet that the vows we had of our own free will exchanged would be quite enough to annul my forced marriage.'

'Ah!'

'You think it evil in me, the more that it was I

who had defaced that countenance. I thought of that! I would have endowed her with all I had if she would set me free. I trusted yet so to do, when, for my misfortune as well as hers, the day of Wakefield cut off her father and brother, and a groom was taken who was on his way to Sendal with tidings of the other brother's death. Then, what do the Queen and Sir Pierre de Brezé but command me to ride off instantly to claim Whitburn Tower! In vain did I refuse; in vain did I plead that if I were about to renounce the lady it were unknightly to seize on her inheritance. They would not hear me. They said it would serve as a door to England, and that it must be secured for the King, or the Dacres would hold it for York. They bade me on my allegiance, and commanded me to take it in King Henry's name, as though it

were a mere stranger's castle, and gave me a crew of hired men-at-arms, as I verily believe to watch over what I did. But ere I started I made a vow in Dr. Morton's hands, to take it only for the King, and so soon as the troubles be ended to restore it to the lady, when our marriage is dissolved. As it fell out, I never saw the lady. Her mother lay a-dying, and there was no summoning her. I bade them show her all due honour, hoisted my pennon, rode on to my uncle at Wearmouth, and thence to mine own lands, whence I joined the Queen on her way to London. As you well know, all was over with our cause at Towton Moor; and it was on my way northward after the deadly fight that half a dozen of the men-at-arms brought me tidings, not only that the Gilsland Dacres had, as had been feared, claimed the castle, but that

this same so-called lady of mine had been shown to deal in sorcery and magic. They sent for a wise man from Shields, but she found by her arts what they were doing, fled, and was slain by an arquebus in the form of a hare !’

‘Do you believe it was herself in sooth?’ asked Grisell.

‘Ah ! you are bred by Master Lambert, who, like his kind, hath little faith in sorcery, but verily, old women do change into hares. All have known them.’

‘She was scarce old,’ Grisell trusted herself to say.

‘That skills not. They said she made strange cures by no rules of art. Ay, and said her prayers backward, and had unknown books.’

‘Did your squire tell this, or was it only the men?’

‘My squire! Poor Pierce, I never saw him. He was made captive by a White Rose party, so far as I could hear, and St. Peter knows where he may be. But look you, the lady, for all her foul looks, had cast her spell over him, and held him as bound and entranced as by a true love, so that he was ready to defend her beauty—her beauty! look you!—against all the world in the lists. He was neither to have nor to hold if any man durst utter a word against her! And it was the same with her tirewoman and her own old squire.’

‘Then, sir, you deem that in slaying the hare, the arquebusier rid you of your witch wife?’ There was a little bitterness, even scorn, in the tone.

‘I say not so, mistress. I know men-at-arms too well to credit all they say, and I was on my

way to inquire into the matter and learn the truth when these same Dacres fell on me; and that I lie here is due to you and good Master Lambert. Many a woman whose face is ill favoured has learnt to keep up her power by unhallowed arts, and if it be so with her whom in my boyish prank I have marred, Heaven forgive her and me. If I can ever return I shall strive to trace her life or death, without which mayhap I could scarce win my true bride.'

Grisell could hear no more of this crushing of her hopes. She crept away murmuring something about the vesper bell at the convent chapel near, for it was there that she could best kneel, while thoughts and strength and resolution came to her.

The one thing clear to her was that Sir

Leonard did not view her, or rather the creature at Whitburn Tower, as his wife, but as a hag, mayhap a sorceress from whom he desired to be released, and that his love to Eleanor Audley was as strong as ever.

Should she make herself known and set him free? Nay, but then what would become of him? He still needed her care, which he accepted as that of a nurse, and while he believed himself to be living on the means supplied by his uncle at Wearmouth to the Apothecary, this had soon been exhausted, and Grisell had partly supplied what was wanting from Ridley's bag, partly from what the old squire had sent her as the fishermen's dues; and she was perceiving how to supplement this, or replace it by her own skill, by her assistance to Lambert in his concoctions, and

likewise by her lace-work, which was of a device learnt at Wilton and not known at Bruges. There was something strangely delightful to her in thus supporting Leonard even though he knew it not, and she determined to persist in her present course till there was some change. Suppose he heard of Eleanor's marriage to some one else! Then? But, ah, the cracked apple face. She must find a glass, or even a pail of water, and judge! Or the Lancastrian fortunes might revive, he might go home in triumph, and then would she give him her ring and her renunciation, and either earn enough to obtain entrance to a convent or perhaps be accepted for the sake of her handiwork!

Any way the prospect was dreary, and the affection which grew upon her as Leonard re-

covered only made it sadder. To reveal herself would only be misery to him, and in his present state of mind would deprive him of all he needed, since he would never be base enough to let her toil for him and then cast her off.

She thought it best, or rather she yearned so much for counsel, that at night, over the fire in the stove, she told what Leonard had said, to which her host listened with the fatherly sympathy that had grown up towards her. He was quite determined against her making herself known. The accusation of sorcery really alarmed him. He said that to be known as the fugitive heiress of Whitburn who had bewitched the young squire and many more might bring both her and himself into imminent danger; and there were Lancastrian exiles who might take up the report. Her only

safety was in being known, to the few who did meet her, as the convent-bred maiden whose home had been destroyed, and who was content to gain a livelihood as the assistant whom his wife's infirmity made needful. As to Sir Leonard, the knight's own grace and gratitude had endeared him, as well as the professional pleasure of curing him, and for the lady's sake he should still be made welcome.

So matters subsided. No one knew Grisell's story except Master Lambert and her Father Confessor, and whether he really knew it, through the medium of her imperfect French, might be doubted. Even Clemence, though of course aware of her identity, did not know all the details, since no one who could communicate with her had thought it well to distress her with the witchcraft story.

Few came beyond the open booth, which served as shop, though sometimes there would be admitted to walk in the garden and converse with Master Groot, a young Englishman who wanted his counsel on giving permanence and clearness to the ink he was using in that new art of printing which he was trying to perfect, but which there were some who averred to be a work of the Evil One, imparted to the magician Dr. Faustus.

CHAPTER XXIV

GRISELL'S PATIENCE

When silent were both voice and chords,
The strain seemed doubly dear,
Yet sad as sweet,—for English words
Had fallen upon the ear.

WORDSWORTH, *Incident at Bruges.*

MEANWHILE Leonard was recovering and vexing himself as to his future course, inclining chiefly to making his way back to Wearmouth to ascertain how matters were going in England.

One afternoon, however, as he sat close to the window, while Grisell sang to him one of her sweet old ballads, a face, attracted by the English words and voice, was turned up to him. He

exclaimed, 'By St. Mary, Philip Scrope,' and starting up, began to feel for the stick which he still needed.

A voice was almost at the same moment heard from the outer shop inquiring in halting French, 'Did I see the face of the Beau Sire Leonard Copeland?'

By the time Leonard had hobbled to the door into the booth, a tall perfectly-equipped man-at-arms, in velvet bonnet with the Burgundian Cross, bright cuirass, rich crimson surcoat, and handsome sword belt, had advanced, and the two embraced as old friends did embrace in the middle ages, especially when each had believed the other dead.

'I deemed thee dead at Towton!'

'Methought you were slain in the north!
You have not come off scot-free.'

‘Nay, but I had a narrow escape. My honest fellows took me to my uncle at Wearmouth, and he shipped me off with the good folk here, and cares for my maintenance. How didst thou ’scape?’

‘Half a dozen of us—Will Percy and a few more—made off from the woful field under cover of night, and got to the sea-shore, to a village—I know not the name—and laid hands on a fisher’s smack, which Jock of Hull was seaman enough to steer with the aid of the lad on board, as far as Friesland, and thence we made our way as best we could to Utrecht, where we had the luck to fall in with one of the Duke’s captains, who was glad enough to meet with a few stout fellows to make up his company of men-at-arms.

‘Oh! Methought it was the Cross of Burgundy. How art thou so well attired, Phil?’

‘We have all been pranked out to guard our Duke to the King of France’s sacring at Rheims. I promise thee the jewels and gold blazed as we never saw the like—and as to the rascaille Scots archers, every one of them was arrayed so as the sight was enough to drive an honest Borderer crazy. Half their own kingdom’s worth was on their beggarly backs. But do what they might, our Duke surpassed them all with his largesses and splendour.’

‘Your Duke!’ grumbled Leonard.

‘Ay, mine for the nonce, and a right open-handed lord is he. Better be under him than under the shrivelled skinflint of France, who wore his fine robes as though they galled him. Come and take service here when thou art whole of thine hurt, Leonard.’

‘I thought thy Duke was disinclined to Lancaster.’

‘He may be to the Queen and the poor King, whom the Saints guard, but he likes English hearts and thews in his pay well enough.’

‘Thou knowst I am a knight, worse luck.’

‘Heed not for thy knighthood. The Duke of Exeter and my Lord of Oxford have put their honours in their pouch and are serving him. Thy lame leg is a worse hindrance than the gold spur on it, but I trow that will pass.’

The comrades talked on, over the fate of English friends and homes, and the hopelessness of their cause. It was agreed in this, and in many subsequent visits from Scrope, that so soon as Leonard should have shaken off his lameness he should begin service under one of the Duke’s

captains. A man-at-arms in the splendid suite of the Burgundian Dukes was generally of good birth, and was attended by two grooms and a page when in the field ; his pay was fairly sufficient, and his accoutrements and arms were required to be such as to do honour to his employer. It was the refuge sooner or later of many a Lancastrian, and Leonard, who doubted of the regularity of his uncle's supplies, decided that he could do no better for himself while waiting for better times for his Queen, though Master Lambert told him that he need not distress himself, there were ample means for him still.

Grisell span and sewed for his outfit, with a strange sad pleasure in working for him, and she was absolutely proud of him when he stood before her, perfectly recovered, with the glow of health

on his cheek and a light in his eye, his length of limb arrayed in his own armour, furbished and mended, his bright helmet alone new and of her own providing (out of her mother's pearl necklace), his surcoat and silken scarf all her own embroidering. As he truly said, he made a much finer appearance than he had done on the morn of his melancholy knighthood, in the poverty-stricken army of King Henry at Northampton.

‘Thanks,’ he said, with a courteous bow, ‘to his good friends and hosts, who had a wonderful power over the purse.’ He added special thanks to ‘Mistress Grisell for her deft stitchery,’ and she responded with downcast face, and a low courtesy, while her heart throbbed high.

Such a cavalier was sure of enlistment, and Leonard came to take leave of his host, and

announce that he had been sent off with his friend to garrison Neufchâtel, where the castle, being a border one, was always carefully watched over.

His friends at Bruges rejoiced in his absence, since it prevented his knowledge of the arrival of his beloved Queen Margaret and her son at Sluys, with only seven attendants, denuded of almost everything, having lost her last castles, and sometimes having had to exist on a single herring a day.

Perhaps Leonard would have laid his single sword at her feet if he had known of her presence ; but tidings travelled slowly, and before they ever reached Neufchâtel the Duke had bestowed on her wherewithal to continue her journey to her father's Court at Bar.

However, he did not move. Indeed he did not hear of the Queen's journey to Scotland and fresh attempt till all had been again lost at Hedgeley Moor and Hexham. He was so good and efficient a man-at-arms that he rose in promotion, and attracted the notice of the Count of Charolais, the eldest son of the Duke, who made him one of his own bodyguard. His time was chiefly spent in escorting the Count from one castle or city to another, but whenever Charles the Bold was at Bruges, Leonard came to the sign of the Green Serpent not only for lodging, nor only to take up the money that Lambert had in charge for him, but as to a home where he was sure of a welcome, and of kindly woman's care of his wardrobe, and where he grew more and more to look to the sympathy and understanding of his English

and Burgundian interests alike, which he found in the maiden who sat by the hearth.

From time to time old Ridley came to see her. He was clad in a pilgrim's gown and broad hat, and looked much older. He had had free quarters at Willimoteswick, but the wild young Borderers had not suited his old age well, except one clerkly youth, who reminded him of little Bernard, and who, later, was the patron of his nephew, the famous Nicolas. He had thus set out on pilgrimage, as the best means of visiting his dear lady. The first time he came, under his robe he carried a girdle, where was sewn up a small supply from Father Copeland for his nephew, and another sum, very meagre, but collected from the faithful retainers of Whitburn for their lady. He meant to visit the Three Kings at Cologne, and then

to go on to St. Gall, and to the various nearer shrines in France, but to return again to see Grisell; and from time to time he showed his honest face, more and more weather-beaten, though a pilgrim was never in want; but Grisell delighted in preparing new gowns, clean linen, and fresh hats for him.

Public events passed while she still lived and worked in the Apothecary's house at Bruges. There were wars in which Sir Leonard Copeland had his share, not very perilous to a knight in full armour, but falling very heavily on poor citizens. Bruges, however, was at peace and exceedingly prosperous, with its fifty-two guilds of citizens, and wonderful trade and wealth. The bells seemed to be always chiming from its many beautiful steeples, and there was one convent

lately founded which began to have a special interest for Grisell.

It was the house of the Hospitalier Grey Sisters, which if not actually founded had been much embellished by Isabel of Portugal, the wife of the Duke of Burgundy. Philip, though called the Good, from his genial manners and bounteous liberality, was a man of violent temper and terrible severity when offended. He had a fierce quarrel with his only son, who was equally hot tempered. The Duchess took part with her son, and fell under such furious displeasure from her husband that she retired into the house of Grey Sisters. She was first cousin once removed to Henry VI.—her mother, the admirable Philippa, having been a daughter of John of Gaunt—and she was the sister of the noble Princes, King Edward of Portugal, Henry

the great voyager, and Ferdinand the Constant Prince; and she had never been thoroughly at home or happy in Flanders, where her husband was of a far coarser nature than her own family; and, in her own words, after many years, she always felt herself a stranger.

Some of Grisell's lace had found its way to the convent, and was at once recognised by her as English, such as her mother had always prized. She wished to give the Chaplain a set of robes adorned with lace after a pattern of her own devising, bringing in the five crosses of Portugal, with appropriate wreaths of flowers and emblems. Being told that the English maiden in Master Groot's house could devise her own patterns, she desired to see her and explain the design in person.

CHAPTER XXV

THE OLD DUCHESS

Temples that rear their stately heads on high,
Canals that intersect the fertile plain,
Wide streets and squares, with many a court and hall,
Spacious and undefined, but ancient all.

SOUTHEY, *Pilgrimage to Waterloo.*

THE kind couple of Groots were exceedingly solicitous about Grisell's appearance before the Duchess, and much concerned that she could not be induced to wear the head-gear a foot or more in height, with veils depending from the peak, which was the fashion of the Netherlands. Her black robe and hood, permitted but not enjoined in the external or third Order of St. Francis, were,

as usual, her dress, and under it might be seen a face, with something peculiar on one side, but still full of sweetness and intelligence; and the years of comfort and quiet had, in spite of anxiety, done much to obliterate the likeness to a cankered oak gall. Lambert wanted to drench her with perfumes, but she only submitted to have a little essence in the pouncet box given her long ago by Lady Margaret at their parting at Amesbury. Master Groot himself chose to conduct her on this first great occasion, and they made their way to the old gateway, sculptured above with figures that still remain, into the great cloistered court, with its chapel, chapter-house, and splendid great airy hall, in which the Hospital Sisters received their patients.

They were seen flitting about, giving a general

effect of grey, whence they were known as Sœurs Grises, though, in fact, their dress was white, with a black hood and mantle. The Duchess, however, lived in a set of chambers on one side of the court, which she had built and fitted for herself.

A lay sister became Grisell's guide, and just then, coming down from the Duchess's apartments, with a board with a chalk sketch in his hand, appeared a young man, whom Groot greeted as Master Hans Memling, and who had been receiving orders, and showing designs to the Duchess for the ornamentation of the convent, which in later years he so splendidly carried out. With him Lambert remained.

There was a broad stone stair, leading to a large apartment hung with stamped Spanish leather, representing the history of King David, and with

a window, glazed as usual below with circles and lozenges, but the upper part glowing with coloured glass. At the farther end was a dais with a sort of throne, like the tester and canopy of a four-post bed, with curtains looped up at each side. Here the Duchess sat, surrounded by her ladies, all in the sober dress suitable with monastic life.

Grisell knew her duty too well not to kneel down when admitted. A dark-complexioned lady came to lead her forward, and directed her to kneel twice on her way to the Duchess. She obeyed, and in that indescribable manner which betrayed something of her breeding, so that after her second obeisance, the manner of the lady altered visibly from what it had been at first as to a burgher maiden. The wealth and luxury of the citizen world of the Low Countries caused the

proud and jealous nobility to treat them with the greater distance of manner. And, as Grisell afterwards learnt, this was Isabel de Souza, Countess of Poitiers, a Portuguese lady who had come over with her Infanta; and whose daughter produced *Les Honneurs de la Cour*, the most wonderful of all descriptions of the formalities of the Court.

Grisell remained kneeling on the steps of the dais, while the Duchess addressed her in much more imperfect Flemish than she could by this time speak herself.

‘You are the lace weaver, maiden. Can you speak French?’

‘*Oui, si madame, son Altesse le veut,*’ replied Grisell, for her tongue had likewise become accustomed to French in this city of many tongues.

‘This is English make,’ said the Duchess, not with a very good French accent either, looking at the specimens handed by her lady. ‘Are you English?’

‘So please your Highness, I am.’

‘An exile?’ the Princess added kindly.

‘Yes, madame. All my family perished in our wars, and I owe shelter to the good Apothecary, Master Lambert.’

‘Purveyor of drugs to the sisters. Yes, I have heard of him;’ and she then proceeded with her orders, desiring to see the first piece Grisell should produce in the pattern she wished, which was to be of roses in honour of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, whom the Peninsular Isabells reckoned as their namesake and patroness.

It was a pattern which would require fresh

pricking out, and much skill; but Grisell thought she could accomplish it, and took her leave, kissing the Duchess's hand—a great favour to be granted to her—curtseying three times, and walking backwards, after the old training that seemed to come back to her with the atmosphere.

Master Lambert was overjoyed when he heard all. 'Now will you find your way back to your proper station and rank,' he said.

'It may do more than that,' said Grisell. 'If I could plead *his* cause.'

Lambert only sighed. 'I would fain your way was not won by a base, mechanical art,' he said.

'Out on you, my master. The needle and the bobbin are unworthy of none; and as to the honour of the matter, what did Sir Leonard tell us

but that the Countess of Oxford, as now she is, was maintaining her husband by her needle?' and Grisell ended with a sigh at thought of the happy woman whose husband knew of, and was grateful for, her toils.

The pattern needed much care, and Lambert induced Hans Memling himself, who drew it so that it could be pricked out for the cushion. In after times it might have been held a greater honour to work from his pattern than for the Duchess, who sent to inquire after it more than once, and finally desired that Mistress Grisell should bring her cushion and show her progress.

She was received with all the same ceremonies as before, and even the small fragment that was finished delighted the Princess, who begged to see her at work. As it could not well be done kneeling,

a footstool, covered in tapestry with the many Burgundian quarterings, was brought, and here Grisell was seated, the Duchess bending over her, and asking questions as her fingers flew, at first about the work, but afterwards, 'Where did you learn this art, maiden?'

'At Wilton, so please your Highness. The nunnery of St. Edith, near to Salisbury.'

'St. Edith! I think my mother, whom the Saints rest, spoke of her; but I have not heard of her in Portugal nor here. Where did she suffer?'

'She was not martyred, madame, but she has a fair legend.'

And on encouragement Grisell related the legend of St. Edith and the christening.

'You speak well, maiden,' said the Duchess.
'It is easy to perceive that you are convent

trained. Have the wars in England hindered your being professed ?’

‘Nay, madame; it was the Proctor of the Italian Abbess.’

Therewith the inquiries of the Duchess elicited all Grisell’s early story, with the exception of her name and whose was the iron that caused the explosion, and likewise of her marriage, and the accusation of sorcery. That male heirs of the opposite party should have expelled the orphan heiress was only too natural an occurrence. Nor did Grisell conceal her home ; but Whitburn was an impossible word to Portuguese lips, and Dacre they pronounced after its crusading derivation De Acor.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DUKE'S DEATH

Wither one Rose, and let the other flourish ;
If you contend, a thousand lives must wither.

SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry VI.*, Part III.

So time went on, and the rule of the House of York in England seemed established, while the exiles had settled down in Burgundy, Grisell to her lace pillow, Leonard to the suite of the Count de Charolais. Indeed there was reason to think that he had come to acquiesce in the change of dynasty, or at any rate to think it unwise and cruel to bring on another desperate civil war. In fact, many of the Red Rose party were making

their peace with Edward IV. Meanwhile the Duchess Isabel became extremely fond of Grisell, and often summoned her to come and work by her side, and talk to her ; and thus came on the summer of 1467, when Duke Philip returned from the sack of unhappy Dinant in a weakened state, and soon after was taken fatally ill. All the city of Bruges watched in anxiety for tidings, for the kindly Duke was really loved where his hand did not press. One evening during the suspense when Master Lambert was gone out to gather tidings, there was the step with clank of spurs which had grown familiar, and Leonard Copeland strode in hot and dusty, greeting Vrow Clemence as usual with a touch of the hand and inclination of the head, and Grisell with hand and courteous voice, as he threw himself on the

settle, heated and weary, and began with tired fingers to unfasten his heavy steel cap.

Grisell hastened to help him, Clemence to fetch a cup of cooling Rhine wine. 'There, thanks, mistress. We have ridden all day from Ghent, in the heat and dust, and after all the Count got before us.'

'To the Duke?'

'Ay! He was like one demented at tidings of his father's sickness. Say what they will of hot words and fierce passages between them, that father and son have hearts loving one another truly.'

'It is well they should agree at the last,' said Grisell, 'or the Count will carry with him the sorest of memories.'

And indeed Charles the Bold was on his knees

beside the bed of his speechless father in an agony of grief.

Presently all the bells in Bruges began to clash out their warning that a soul was passing to the unseen land, and Grisell made signs to Clemence, while Leonard lifted himself upright, and all breathed the same for the mighty Prince as for the poorest beggar, the intercession for the dying. Then the solemn note became a knell, and their prayer changed to the *De Profundis*, 'Out of the depths.'

Presently Lambert Groot came in, grave and saddened, with the intelligence that Philip the Good had departed in peace, with his wife and son on either side of him, and his little granddaughter kneeling beside the Duchess.

There was bitter weeping all over Bruges, and

soon all over Flanders and the other domains united under the Dukedom of Burgundy, for though Philip had often deeply erred, he had been a fair ruler, balancing discordant interests justly, and maintaining peace, while all that was splendid or luxurious prospered and thrived under him. There was a certain dread of the future under his successor.

‘A better man at heart,’ said Leonard, who had learnt to love the Count de Charolais. ‘He loathes the vices and revelry that have stained the Court.’

‘That is true,’ said Lambert. ‘Yet he is a man of violence, and with none of the skill and dexterity with which Duke Philip steered his course.’

‘A plague on such skill,’ muttered Leonard.

‘Caring solely for his own gain, not for the right!’

‘Yet your Count has a heavy hand,’ said Lambert. ‘Witness Dinant! unhappy Dinant.’

‘The rogues insulted his mother,’ said Leonard. ‘He offered them terms which they would not have in their stubborn pride! But speak not of that! I never saw the like in England. There we strike at the great, not at the small. Ah well, with all our wars and troubles England was the better place to live in. Shall we ever see it more?’

There was something delightful to Grisell in that ‘we,’ but she made answer, ‘So far as I hear, there has been quiet there for the last two years under King Edward.’

‘Ay, and after all he has the right of blood,’

said Leonard. 'Our King Henry is a saint, and Queen Margaret a peerless dame of romance, but since I have come to years of understanding I have seen that they neither had true claim of inheritance nor power to rule a realm.'

'Then would you make your peace with the White Rose?'

'The *rose en soleil* that wrought us so much evil at Mortimer's Cross? Methinks I would. I never swore allegiance to King Henry. My father was still living when last I saw that sweet and gracious countenance which I must defend for love and reverence sake.'

'And he knighted you,' said Grisell.

'True,' with a sharp glance, as if he wondered how she was aware of the fact; 'but only as my father's heir. My poor old house and tenants!

I would I knew how they fare; but mine uncle sends me no letters, though he does supply me.'

'Then you do not feel bound in honour to Lancaster?' said Grisell.

'Nay; I did not stir or strive to join the Queen when last she called up the Scots—the Scots indeed!—to aid her. I could not join them in a foray on England. I fear me she will move heaven and earth again when her son is of age to bear arms; but my spirit rises against allies among Scots or French, and I cannot think it well to bring back bloodshed and slaughter.'

'I shall pray for peace,' said Grisell. All this was happiness to her, as she felt that he was treating her with confidence. Would she ever be nearer to him?

He was a graver, more thoughtful man at

seven-and-twenty than he had been at the time of his hurried marriage, and had conversed with men of real understanding of the welfare of their country. Such talks as these made Grisell feel that she could look up to him as most truly her lord and guide. But how was it with the fair Eleanor, and whither did his heart incline? An English merchant, who came for spices, had said that the Lord Audley had changed sides, and it was thus probable that the damsel was bestowed in marriage to a Yorkist; but there was no knowing, nor did Grisell dare to feel her way to discovering whether Leonard knew, or felt himself still bound to constancy, outwardly and in heart.

Every one was taken up with the funeral solemnities of Duke Philip; he was to be finally

interred with his father and grandfather in the grand tombs at Dijon, but for the present the body was to be placed in the Church of St. Donatus at Bruges, at night.

Sir Leonard rode at a foot's pace in the troop of men-at-arms, all in full armour, which glanced in the light of the sixteen hundred torches which were borne before, behind, and in the midst of the procession, which escorted the bier. Outside the coffin, arrayed in ducal coronet and robes, with the Golden Fleece collar round the neck, lay the exact likeness of the aged Duke, and on shields around the pall, as well as on banners borne waving aloft, were the armorial bearings of all his honours, his four dukedoms, seven counties, lordships innumerable, besides the banners of all the guilds, carried to do him honour.

More than twenty prelates were present, and shared in the mass, which began in the morning hour, and in the requiem. The heralds of all the domains broke their white staves and threw them on the bier, proclaiming that Philip, lord of all these lands, was deceased. Then, as in the case of royalty, Charles his son was proclaimed; and the organ led an acclamation of jubilee from all the assembly which filled the church, and a shout as of thunder arose, 'Vivat Carolus.'

Charles knelt meanwhile with hands clasped over his brow, silent, immovable. Was he crushed at thought of the whirlwinds of passion that had raged between him and the father whom he had loved all the time? or was there on him the weight of a foreboding that he, though free from the grosser faults of his father, would never

win and keep hearts in the same manner, and that a sad, tumultuous, troubled career and piteous, untimely end lay before him?

His mother, Grisell's Duchess, according to the rule of the Court, lay in bed for six weeks—at least she was bound to lie there whenever she was not in entire privacy. The room and bed were hung with black, but a white covering was over her, and she was fully dressed in the black and white weeds of royal widowhood. The light of day was excluded, and hosts of wax candles burnt around.

Grisell did not see her during this first period of stately mourning, but she heard that the good lady had spent her time in weeping and praying for her husband, all the more earnestly that she had little cause personally to mourn him.

CHAPTER XXVII

FORGET ME NOT

And added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.

TENNYSON, *Elaine*.

THE Duchess Isabel sent for Grisell as soon as the rules of etiquette permitted, and her own mind was free, to attend to the suite of lace hangings, with which much progress had been made in the interval. She was in the palace now, greatly honoured, for her son loved her with devoted affection, and Grisell had to pass through tapestry-hung halls and chambers, one after another, with

persons in mourning, all filled with men-at-arms first, then servants still in black dresses. Next pages and squires, knights of the lady, and lastly ladies in black velvet, who sat at their work, with a chaplain reading to them. One of these, the Countess of Poitiers, whom Grisell had known at the Grey Sisters' convent, rose, graciously received her obeisance, and conducted her into the great State bedroom, likewise very sombre, with black hangings worked and edged, however, with white, and the window was permitted to let in the light of day. The bed was raised on steps in an alcove, and was splendidly draped and covered with black embroidered with white, but the Duchess did not occupy it. A curtain was lifted, and she came forward in her deepest robes of widowhood, leading her little

grand-daughter Mary, a child of eight or nine years old. Grisell knelt to kiss the hands of each, and the Duchess said—

‘Good Griselda, it is long since I have seen you. Have you finished the border?’

‘Yes, your Highness; and I have begun the edging of the corporal.’

The Duchess looked at the work with admiration, and bade the little Mary, the damsel of Burgundy, look on and see how the dainty web was woven, while she signed the maker to seat herself on a step of the alcove.

When the child’s questions and interest were exhausted, and she began to be somewhat perilously curious about the carved weights of the bobbins, her grandmother sent her to play with the ladies in the ante-room, desiring Grisell

to continue the work. After a few kindly words the Duchess said, 'The poor child is to have a stepdame so soon as the year of mourning is passed. May she be good to her! Hath the rumour thereof reached you in the city, Maid Griselda, that my son is in treaty with your English King, though he loves not the house of York? But princely alliances must be looked for in marriage.'

'Madge!' exclaimed Grisell; then colouring, 'I should say the Lady Margaret of York.'

'You knew her?'

'Oh! I knew her. We loved each other well in the Lord of Salisbury's house! There never was a maid whom I knew or loved like her!'

'In the Count of Salisbury's house,' repeated the Duchess. 'Were you there as the Lady

Margaret's fellow-pupil?' she said, as though perceiving that her lace-maker must be of higher quality than she had supposed.

'It was while my father was alive, madame, and before her father had fixed his eyes on the throne, your Highness.'

'And your father was, you said, the knight De—De—D'Acor.'

'So please you, madame,' said Grisell kneeling, 'not to mention my poor name to the lady.'

'We are a good way from speech of her,' said the Duchess smiling. 'Our year of doole must pass, and mayhap the treaty will not hold in the meantime. The King of France would fain hinder it. But if the Demoiselle loved you of old, would she not give you preferment in her train if she knew?'

‘Oh! madame, I pray you name me not till she be here! There is much that hangs on it, more than I can tell at present, without doing harm; but I have a petition to prefer to her.’

‘An affair of true love,’ said the Duchess smiling.

‘I know not. Oh! ask me not, madame!’

When Grisell was dismissed, she began designing a pattern, in which in spray after spray of rich point, she displayed in the pure frost-work-like web, the Daisy of Margaret, the Rose of York, and moreover, combined therewith, the saltire of Nevil and the three scallops of Dacre, and each connected with ramifications of the forget-me-not flower shaped like the turquoises of her pouncet box, and with the letter G to be traced by ingenious eyes, though the uninitiated might observe nothing.

She had plenty of time, though the treaty soon made it as much of a certainty as royal betrothals ever were, but it was not till July came round again that Bruges was in a crisis of the fever of preparation to receive the bride. Sculptors, painters, carvers were desperately at work at the Duke's palace. Weavers, tapestry-workers, embroiderers, sempstresses were toiling day and night, armourers and jewellers had no rest, and the bright July sunshine lay glittering on the canals, graceful skiffs, and gorgeous barges, and bringing out in full detail the glories of the architecture above, the tapestry-hung windows in the midst, the gaily-clad Vrows beneath, while the bells rang out their merriest carillons from every steeple, whence fluttered the banners of the guilds.

The bride, escorted by Sir Antony Wydville,

was to land at Sluys, and Duchess Isabel, with little Mary, went to receive her.

‘Will you go with me as one of my maids, or as a firewoman perchance?’ asked the Duchess kindly.

Grisell fell on her knee and thanked her, but begged to be permitted to remain where she was until the bride should have some leisure. And indeed her doubts and suspense grew more overwhelming. As she freshly trimmed and broidered Leonard’s surcoat and sword-belt, she heard one of the many gossips who delighted to recount the members of the English suite as picked up from the subordinates of the heralds and pursuivants who had to marshal the procession and order the banquet. ‘Fair ladies too,’ he said, ‘from England. There is the Lord Audley’s

daughter with her father. They say she is the very pearl of beauties. We shall see whether our fair dames do not surpass her.'

'The Lord Audley's daughter did you say?' asked Grisell.

'His daughter, yea; but she is a widow, bearing in her lozenge, per pale with Audley, gules three herrings haurient argent, for Heringham. She is one of the Duchess Margaret's dames-of-honour.'

To Grisell it sounded like her doom on one side, the crisis of her self-sacrifice, and the opening of Leonard's happiness on the other.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PAGEANT

When I may read of tilts in days of old,
And tourneys graced by chieftains of renown,
Fair dames, grave citoyens, and warriors bold—
If fancy would pourtray some stately town,
Which for such pomp fit theatre would be,
Fair Bruges, I shall then remember thee.

SOUTHEY, *Pilgrimage to Waterloo*.

LEONARD COPELAND was in close attendance on the Duke, and could not give a moment to visit his friends at the Green Serpent, so that there was no knowing how the presence of the Lady of Heringham affected him. Duke Charles rode out to meet his bride at the little town of Damme, and here the more important portions of the

betrothal ceremony took place, after which he rode back alone to the Cour des Princes, leaving to the bride all the splendour of the entrance.

The monastic orders were to be represented in the procession. The Grey Sisters thought they had an especial claim, and devised the presenting a crown of white roses at the gates, and with great pleasure Grisell contributed the best of Master Lambert's lovely white Provence roses to complete the garland, which was carried by the youngest novice, a fair white rosebud herself.

Every one all along the line of the tall old houses was hanging from window to window rich tapestries of many dyes, often with gold and silver thread. The trades and guilds had renewed their signs, banners and pennons hung from every abode entitled to their use, garlands of bright flowers

stretched here and there and everywhere. All had been in a frenzy of preparation for many days past, and the final touches began with the first hours of light in the long, summer morning. To Grisell's great delight, Cuthbert Ridley plodded in at the hospitable door of the Green Serpent the night before. 'Ah! my ladybird,' said he, 'in good health as ever.'

'All the better for seeing you, mine old friend,' she cried. 'I thought you were far away at Compostella.'

'So verily I was. Here's St. James's cockle to wit—Santiago as they call him there, and show the stone coffin he steered across the sea. No small miracle that! And I've crossed France, and looked at many a field of battle of the good old times, and thought and said a prayer for the

brave knights who broke lances there. But as I was making for St. Martha's cave in Provence, I met a friar, who told me of the goodly gathering there was like to be here; and I would fain see whether I could hap upon old friends, or at any rate hear a smack of our kindly English tongue, so I made the best of my way hither.'

'In good time,' said Lambert. 'You will take the lady and the housewife to the stoop at Master Caxton's house, where he has promised them seats whence they may view the entrance. I myself am bound to walk with my fellows of the Apothecaries Society, and it will be well for them to have another guard in the throng, besides old Anton.'

'Nay, but my garb scarce befits the raree show,' said Ridley, looking at his russet gown.

'We will see to that anon,' said Lambert; and

ere supper was over, old Anton had purveyed a loose blue gown from the neighbouring merchants, with gold lace seams and girdle, peaked boots, and the hideous brimless hat which was then highly fashionable. Ridley's trusty sword he had always worn under his pilgrim's gown, and with the dagger always used as a knife, he made his appearance once more as a squire of degree, still putting the scallop into his hat, in honour of Dacre as well as of St. James.

The party had to set forth very early in the morning, slowly gliding along several streets in a barge, watching the motley crowds thronging banks and bridges—a far more brilliant crowd than in these later centuries, since both sexes were alike gay in plumage. From every house, even those out of the line of the procession, hung

tapestry, or coloured cloths, and the garlands of flowers, of all bright hues, with their fresh greenery, were still unfaded by the clear morning sun, while joyous carillons echoed and re-echoed from the belfry and all the steeples. Ridley owned that he had never seen the like since King Harry rode home from Agincourt—perhaps hardly even then, for Bruges was at the height of its splendour, as were the Burgundian Dukes at the very climax of their magnificence.

After landing from the barge Ridley, with Grisell on his arm, and Anton with his mistress, had a severe struggle with the crowd before they gained the ascent of the stoop, where the upper steps had been railed in, and seats arranged under the shelter of the projecting roof.

Master Caxton was a gray-eyed, thin-cheeked,

neatly-made Kentishman, who had lived long abroad, and was always ready to make an Englishman welcome. He listened politely to Grisell's introduction of Master Ridley, exchanged silent greetings with Vrow Clemence, and insisted on their coming into the chamber within, where a repast of cold pasty, marchpane, strawberries, and wine awaited them—to be eaten while as yet there was nothing to see save the expectant multitudes.

Moreover, he wanted to show Mistress Grisell, as one of the few who cared for it, the manuscripts he had collected on the history of Troy town, and likewise the strange machine on which he was experimenting for multiplying copies of the translation he had in hand, with blocks for the woodcuts which Grisell could not in conscience

say would be as beautiful as the gorgeous illuminations of his books.

Acclamations summoned them to the front, of course at first to see only scattered bodies of the persons on the way to meet the bride at the gate of St. Croix.

By and by, however, came the 'gang,' as Ridley called it, in earnest. Every body of ecclesiastics was there: monks and friars, black, white, and grey; nuns, black, white, and blue; the clergy in their richest robes, with costly crucifixes of gold, silver, and ivory held aloft, and reliquaries of the most exquisite workmanship, sparkling with precious jewels, diamond, ruby, emerald, and sapphire flashing in the sun; the fifty-two guilds in gowns, each headed by their Master and their banner, gorgeous in tint, but with homely devices, such as

stockings, saw and compasses, weavers' shuttles, and the like. Master Lambert looked up and nodded a smile from beneath a banner with Apollo and the Python, which Ridley might be excused for taking for St. Michael and the Dragon. The Mayor in scarlet, white fur and with gold collar, surrounded by his burgomasters in almost equally radiant garments, marched on.

Next followed the ducal household, trumpets and all sorts of instruments before them, making the most festive din, through which came bursts of the joy bells. Violet and black arrayed the inferiors, setting off the crimson satin pourpoints of the higher officers, on whose brimless hats each waved with a single ostrich plume in a shining brooch.

Then came more instruments, and a body of

gay green archers ; next heralds and pursuivants, one for each of the Duke's domains, glittering back and front in the tabard of his county's armorial bearings, and with its banner borne beside him. Then a division of the Duke's body-guard, all like himself in burnished armour with scarves across them. The nobles of Burgundy, Flanders, Hainault, Holland, and Alsace, the most splendid body then existing, came in endless numbers, their horses, feather-crested as well as themselves, with every bridle tinkling with silver bells, and the animals invisible all but their heads and tails under their magnificent housings, while the knights seemed to be pillars of radiance. Yet even more gorgeous were the knights of the Golden Fleece, who left between them a lane in which moved six white horses, caparisoned in

cloth of gold, drawing an open litter in which sat, as on a throne, herself dazzling in cloth of silver, the brown-eyed Margaret of old, her dark hair bride fashion flowing on her shoulders, and around it a marvellously-glancing diamond coronet, above it, however, the wreath of white roses, which her own hands had placed there when presented by the novice. Clemence squeezed Grisell's hand with delight as she recognised her own white rose, the finest of the garland.

Immediately after the car came Margaret's English attendants, the stately, handsome Antony Wydville riding nearest to her, and then a bevy of dames and damsels on horseback, but moving so slowly that Grisell had full time to discover the silver herrings on the caparisons of one of the palfreys, and then to raise her eyes to the face of

the tall stately lady whose long veil, flowing down from her towered head-gear, by no means concealed a beautiful complexion and fair perfect features, such as her own could never have rivalled even if they had never been defaced. Her heart sank within her, everything swam before her eyes, she scarcely saw the white doves let loose from the triumphant arch beyond to greet the royal lady, and was first roused by Ridley's exclamation as the knights with their attendants began to pass.

'Ha! the lad kens me! 'Tis Harry Featherstone as I live.'

Much more altered in these seven years than was Cuthbert Ridley, there rode as a fully-equipped squire in the rear of a splendid knight, Harry Featherstone, the survivor of the dismal Bridge of Wakefield. He was lowering his lance

in greeting, but there was no knowing whether it was to Ridley or to Grisell, or whether he recognised her, as she wore her veil far over her face.

This to Grisell closed the whole. She did not see the figure which was more to her than all the rest, for he was among the knights and guards waiting at the Cour des Princes to receive the bride when the final ceremonies of the marriage were to be performed.

Ridley declared his intention of seeking out young Featherstone, but Grisell impressed on him that she wished to remain unknown for the present, above all to Sir Leonard Copeland, and he had been quite sufficiently alarmed by the accusations of sorcery to believe in the danger of her becoming known among the English.

‘More by token,’ said he, ‘that the house of

this Master Caxton as you call him seems to me no canny haunt. Tell me what you will of making manifold good books or bad, I'll never believe but that Dr. Faustus and the Devil hatched the notion between them for the bewilderment of men's brains and the slackening of their hands.'

Thus Ridley made little more attempt to persuade his young lady to come forth to the spectacles of the next fortnight to which he rushed, through crowds and jostling, to behold, with the ardour of an old warrior, the various tilts and tourneys, though he grumbled that they were nothing but child's play and vain show, no earnest in them fit for a man.

Clemence, however, was all eyes, and revelled in the sight of the wonders, the view of the Tree of

Gold, and the champion thereof in the lists of the Hôtel de Ville, and again, some days later, of the banquet, when the table decorations were mosaic gardens with silver trees, laden with enamelled fruit, and where, as an interlude, a whale sixty feet long made its entrance and emitted from its jaws a troop of Moorish youths and maidens, who danced a saraband to the sound of tambourines and cymbals! Such scenes were bliss to the deaf housewife, and would enliven the silent world of her memory all the rest of her life.

The Duchess Isabel had retired to the Grey Sisters, such scenes being inappropriate to her mourning, and besides, her apartments being needed for the influx of guests. There, in early morning, before the revels began, Grisell ventured to ask for an audience, and was permitted to

follow the Duchess when she returned from mass to her own apartments.

‘Ah! my lace weaver. Have you had your share in the revels and pageantries?’

‘I saw the procession, so please your Grace.’

‘And your old playmate in her glory?’

‘Yea, madame. It almost forestalled the glories of Heaven!’

‘Ah! child, may the aping of such glory beforehand not unfit us for the veritable everlasting glories, when all these things shall be no more.’

The Duchess clasped her hands, almost as a foreboding of the day when her son’s corpse should lie, forsaken, gashed, and stripped, beside the marsh.

But she turned to Grisell asking if she had come with any petition.

‘Only, madame, that it would please your Highness to put into the hands of the new Duchess herself, this offering, without naming me.’

She produced her exquisite fabric, which was tied with ribbons of blue and silver in an outer case, worked with the White Rose.

The Dowager-Duchess exclaimed, ‘Nay, but this is more beauteous than all you have wrought before. Ah! here is your own device! I see there is purpose in these patterns of your web. And am I not to name you?’

‘I pray your Highness to be silent, unless the Duchess should divine the worker. Nay, it is scarce to be thought that she will.’

‘Yet you have put the flower that my English

mother called "Forget-me-not." Ah ! maiden, has it a purpose ?'

'Madame, madame, ask me no questions. Only remember in your prayers to ask that I may do the right,' said Grisell, with clasped hands and weeping eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX

DUCHESS MARGARET

I beheld the pageants splendid, that adorned those days of old ;
Stately dames, like queens attended, knights who bore the
Fleece of Gold.

LONGFELLOW, *The Belfry of Bruges*.

IN another week the festivities were over, and she waited anxiously, dreading each day more and more that her gift had been forgotten or misunderstood, or that her old companion disdained or refused to take notice of her ; then trying to console herself by remembering the manifold engagements and distractions of the bride.

Happily, Grisell thought, Ridley was absent

when Leonard Copeland came one evening to supper. He was lodged among the guards of the Duke in the palace, and had much less time at his disposal than formerly, for Duke Charles insisted on the most strict order and discipline among all his attendants. Moreover, there were tokens of enmity on the part of the French on the border of the Somme, and Leonard expected to be despatched to the camp which was being formed there. He was out of spirits. The sight and speech of so many of his countrymen had increased the longing for home.

‘I loathe the mincing French and the fat Flemish tongues,’ he owned, when Master Lambert was out of hearing. ‘I should feel at home if I could but hear an honest carter shout “Woa” to his horses.’

‘Did you have any speech with the ladies?’ asked Grisell.

‘I? No! What reck they of a poor knight adventurer?’

‘Methought all the chivalry were peers, and that a belted knight was a comrade for a king,’ said Grisell.

‘Ay, in the days of the Round Table; but when Dukes and Counts, and great Marquesses and Barons swarm like mayflies by a trout stream, what chance is there that a poor, landless exile will have a word or a glance?’

Did this mean that the fair Eleanor had scorned him? Grisell longed to know, but for that very reason she faltered when about to ask, and turned her query into one whether he had heard any news of his English relations.

‘My good uncle at Wearmouth hath been dead these four years—so far as I can gather. Amply must he have supplied Master Groot. I must account with him. For mine inheritance I can gather nothing clearly. I fancy the truth is that George Copeland, who holds it, is little better than a reiver on either side, and that King Edward might grant it back to me if I paid my homage, save that he is sworn never to pardon any who had a share in the death of his brother of Rutland.’

‘You had not! I know you had not!’

‘Hurt Ned? I’d as soon have hurt my own brother! Nay, I got this blow from Clifford for coming between,’ said he, pushing back his hair so as to show a mark near his temple. ‘But how did you know?’

‘Harry Featherstone told me.’ She had all but said, ‘My father’s squire.’

‘You knew Featherstone? Belike when he was at Whitburn. He is here now; a good man of his hands,’ muttered Leonard. ‘Anyway the King believes I had a hand in that cruel business of Wakefield Bridge, and nought but his witness would save my neck if once I ventured into England—if that would. So I may resign myself to be the Duke’s captain of archers for the rest of my days. Heigh ho! And a lonely man; I fear me in debt to good Master Lambert, or may be to Mistress Grisell, to whom I owe more than coin will pay. Ha! was that——’ interrupting himself, for a trumpet blast was ringing out at intervals, the signal of summons to the men-at-arms. Leonard started up, waved farewell, and rushed off.

The summons proved to be a call to the men-at-arms to attend the Duke early the next morning on an expedition to visit his fortresses in Picardy, and as the household of the Green Serpent returned from mass, they heard the tramp and clatter, and saw the armour flash in the sun as the troop passed along the main street, and became visible at the opening of that up which they walked.

The next day came a summons from the convent of the Grey Sisters that Mistress Griselda was to attend the Duchess Isabel.

She longed to fly through the air, but her limbs trembled. Indeed, she shook so that she could not stand still nor walk slowly. She hurried on so that the lay sister who had been sent for her was quite out of breath, and panted after her with

gasps of 'Stay! stay, mistress! No bear is after us! She runs as though a mad ox had got loose!'

Her heart was wild enough for anything! She might have to hear from her kind Duchess that all was vain and unnoticed.

Up the stair she went, to the accustomed chamber, where an additional chair was on the dais under the canopy, the half circle of ladies as usual; but before she had seen more with her dazzled, swimming eyes, even as she rose from her first genuflection, she found herself in a pair of soft arms, kisses rained on her cheeks and brow, and there was a tender cry in her own tongue of 'My Grisell! my dear old Grisell! I have found you at last! Oh! that was good in you. I knew the forget-me-nots, and all your little devices.

Ah!’ as Grisell, unable to speak for tears of joy, held up the pouncet box, the childish gift.

The soft pink velvet bodice girdled and clasped with diamonds was pressed to her, the deep hanging silken sleeves were round her, the white satin broidered skirt swept about her feet, the pearl-edged matronly cap on the youthful head leant fondly against her, as Margaret led her up, still in her embrace, and cried, ‘It is she, it is she! Dear belle mère, thanks indeed for bringing us together!’

The Countess of Poitiers looked on scandalised at English impulsiveness, and the elder Duchess herself looked for a moment stiff, as her lace-maker slipped to her knees to kiss her hand and murmur her thanks.

‘Let me look at you,’ cried Margaret. ‘Ah! have you recovered that terrible mishap? By my troth, ’tis nearly gone. I should never have found it out had I not known!’

This was rather an exaggeration, but joy did make a good deal of difference in Grisell’s face, and the Duchess Margaret was one of the most eager and warm-hearted people living, fervent alike in love and in hate, ready both to act on slight evidence for those whose cause she took up, and to nourish bitter hatred against the enemies of her house.

‘Now, tell me all,’ she continued in English. ‘I heard that you had been driven out of Wilton, and my uncle of Warwick had sped you northward. How is it that you are here, weaving lace like any mechanical sempstress? Nay, nay! I

cannot listen to you on your knees. We have hugged one another too often for that.'

Grisell, with the elder Duchess's permission, seated herself on the cushion at Margaret's feet. 'Speak English,' continued the bride. 'I am wearying already of French! Ma belle mère, you will not find fault. You know a little of our own honest tongue.'

Duchess Isabel smiled, and Grisell, in answer to the questions of Margaret, told her story. When she came to the mention of her marriage to Leonard Copeland, there was the vindictive exclamation, 'Bound to that blood-thirsty traitor! Never! After the way he treated you, no marvel that he fell on my sweet Edmund!'

'Ah! madame, he did not! He tried to save him.'

‘He! A follower of King Henry! Never!’

‘Truly, madame! He had ever loved Lord Edmund. He strove to stay Lord Clifford’s hand, and threw himself between, but Clifford dashed him aside, and he bears still the scar where he fell against the parapet of the bridge. Harry Featherstone told me, when he fled from the piteous field, where died my father and brother Robin.’

‘Your brother, Robin Dacre! I remember him. I would have made him good cheer for your sake, but my mother was ever strict, and rapped our fingers, nay, treated us to the rod, if we ever spake to any of my father’s *meiné*. Tell on, Grisell,’ as her hand found its way under the hood, and stroked the fair hair. ‘Poor lonely one!’

Her indignation was great when she heard of

Copeland's love, and still more of his mission to seize Whitburn, saying, truly enough, that he should have taken both lady and Tower, or given both up, and lending a most unwilling ear to the plea that he had never thought his relations to Grisell binding. She had never loved Lady Heringham, and it was plainly with good cause.

Then followed the rest of the story, and when it appeared that Grisell had been instrumental in saving Copeland, and close inquiries elicited that she had been maintaining him all this while, actually for seven years, all unknown to him, the young Duchess could not contain herself. 'Grisell! Grisell of patience indeed. Belle mère, belle mère, do you understand?' and in rapid French she recounted all.

'He is my husband,' said Grisell simply, as

the two Duchesses showed their wonder and admiration.

‘Never did tale or ballad show a more saintly wife,’ cried Margaret. ‘And now what would you have me do for you, my most patient of Grisells? Write to my brother the King to restore your lands, and—and I suppose you would have this recreant fellow’s given back since you say he has seen the error of following that make-bate Queen. But can you prove him free of Edmund’s blood? Aught but that might be forgiven.’

‘Master Featherstone is gone back to England,’ said Grisell, ‘but he can bear witness; but my father’s old squire, Cuthbert Ridley, is here, who heard his story when he came to us from Wakefield. Moreover, I have seen the mark on Sir Leonard’s brow.’

‘Let be. I will write to Edward an you will. He has been more prone to Lancaster folk since he was caught by the wiles of Lady Grey ; but I would that I could hear what would clear this knight of yours by other testimony than such as your loving heart may frame. But you must come and be one of mine, my own ladies, Grisell, and never go back to your Poticary—Faugh!’

This, however, Grisell would not hear of ; and Margaret really revered her too much to press her.

However, Ridley was sent for to the Cour des Princes, and returned with a letter to be borne to King Edward, and likewise a mission to find Featherstone, and if possible Red Jock.

‘’Tis working for that rogue Copeland,’ he growled. ‘I would it were for you, my sweet lady.’

‘It is working for me! Think so with all your heart, good Cuthbert.’

‘Well, end as it may, you will at least ken who and what you are, wed or unwed, fish, flesh or good red herring, and cease to live nameless, like the Poticary’s serving-woman,’ concluded Ridley as his parting grumble.

CHAPTER XXX

THE WEDDING CHIMES

Low at times and loud at times,
Changing like a poet's rhymes,
Rang the beautiful wild chimes,
From the belfry in the market
Of the ancient town of Bruges.

LONGFELLOW, *The Carillon*.

No more was heard of the Duchess for some weeks. Leonard was absent with the Duke, who was engaged in that unhappy affair of Peronne and Liège, the romantic version of which may be read in *Quentin Durward*, and with which the present tale dares not to meddle, though it seemed to blast the life of Charles the Bold, all unknowing.

The Duchess Margaret was youthful enough to have a strong taste for effect, and it was after a long and vexatious delay that Grisell was suddenly summoned to her presence, to be escorted by Master Groot. There she sat, on her chair of state, with the high tapestried back and the square canopy, and in the throng of gentlemen around her Grisell at a glance recognised Sir Leonard, and likewise Cuthbert Ridley and Harry Featherstone, though of course it was not etiquette to exchange any greetings.

She knelt to kiss the Duchess's hand, and as she did so Margaret raised her, kissing her brow, and saying with a clear full voice, 'I greet you, Lady Copeland, Baroness of Whitburn. Here is a letter from my brother, King Edward, calling on the Bishop of Durham, Count Palatine, to put

you in possession of thy castle and lands, whoever may gainsay it.'

That Leonard started with amazement and made a step forward Grisell was conscious, as she bent again to kiss the hand that gave the letter; but there was more to come, and Margaret continued—

'Also, to you, as to one who has the best right, I give this parchment, sealed and signed by my brother, the King, containing his full and free pardon to the good knight, Sir Leonard Copeland, and his restoration to all his honours and his manors. Take it, Lady of Whitburn. It was you, his true wife, who won it for him. It is you who should give it to him. Stand forth, Sir Leonard.'

He did stand forth, faltering a little, as his

first impulse had been to kneel to Grisell, then recollecting himself, to fall at the Duchess's feet in thanks.

'To her, to her,' said the Duchess ; but Grisell, as he turned, spoke, trying to clear her voice from a rising sob.

'Sir Leonard, wait, I pray. Her Highness hath not spoken all. I am well advised that the wedlock into which you were forced against your will was of no avail to bind us, as you in mind and will were contracted to the Lady Eleanor Audley.'

Leonard opened his lips, but she waved him to silence. 'True, I know that she was likewise constrained to wed ; but she is a widow, and free to choose for herself. Therefore, either by the Bishop, or it may be through our Holy Father the

Pope, by mutual consent, shall the marriage at Whitburn be annulled and declared void, and I pray you to accept seisin thereof, while my lady, her Highness the Duchess Isabel, with the Lady Prioress, will accept me as a Grey Sister.'

There was a murmur. Margaret utterly amazed would have sprung forward and exclaimed, but Leonard was beforehand with her.

'Never! never!' he cried, throwing himself on his knees and mastering his wife's hand. 'Grisell, Grisell, dost think I could turn to the feather-pated, dull-souled, fickle-hearted thing I know now Eleanor of Audley to be, instead of you?'

There was a murmur of applause, led by the young Duchess herself, but Grisell tried still to withdraw her hand, and say in low broken tones, 'Nay, nay; she is fair, I am loathly.'

‘What is her fair skin to me?’ he cried; ‘to me, who have learnt to know, and love, and trust to you with a very different love from the boy’s passion I felt for Eleanor in youth, and the cure whereof was the sight and words of the Lady Herringham! Grisell, Grisell, I was about to lay my very heart at your feet when the Duke’s trumpet called me away, ere I guessed, fool that I was, that mine was the hand that left the scar that now I love, but which once I treated with a brute’s or a boy’s lightness. Oh! pardon me! Still less did I know that it was my own forsaken wife who saved my life, who tended my sickness, nay, as I verily believed, toiled for me and my bread through these long seven years, all in secret. Yea, and won my entire soul and deep devotion or ever I knew that it was to you alone that they

were due. Grisell, Grisell,' as she could not speak for tears. 'Oh forgive! Pardon me! Turn not away to be a Grey Sister. I cannot do without you! Take me! Let me strive throughout my life to merit a little better all that you have done and suffered for one so unworthy!'

Grisell could not speak, but she turned towards him, and regardless of all spectators, she was for the first time clasped in her husband's arms, amid the joyful tears of her friends, high and low.

What more shall be told of that victory? Shall it be narrated how this wedlock was blest in the chapel, while all the lovely bells of Bruges rang out in rejoicing, how Mynheer Groot and Clemence rejoiced though they lost their guest,

how Caxton gave them a choice specimen of his printing, how Ridley doffed his pilgrim's garb and came out as a squire of dames, how the farewells were sorrowfully exchanged with the Duchess, and how the Duke growled that from whichever party he took his stout English he was sure to lose them?

Then there was homage to King Edward paid not very willingly, and a progress northward. At York, Thora, looking worn and haggard, came and entreated forgiveness, declaring that she had little guessed what her talk was doing, and that Ralph made her believe whatever he chose! She had a hard life, treated like a slave by the burgesses, who despised the fisher maid. Oh that she could go back to serve her dear good lady!

There was a triumph at Whitburn to welcome

the lady after the late reign of misrule, and so did the knight and dame govern their estates that for long years the time of 'Grisly Grisell' was remembered as Whitburn's golden age.

THE END

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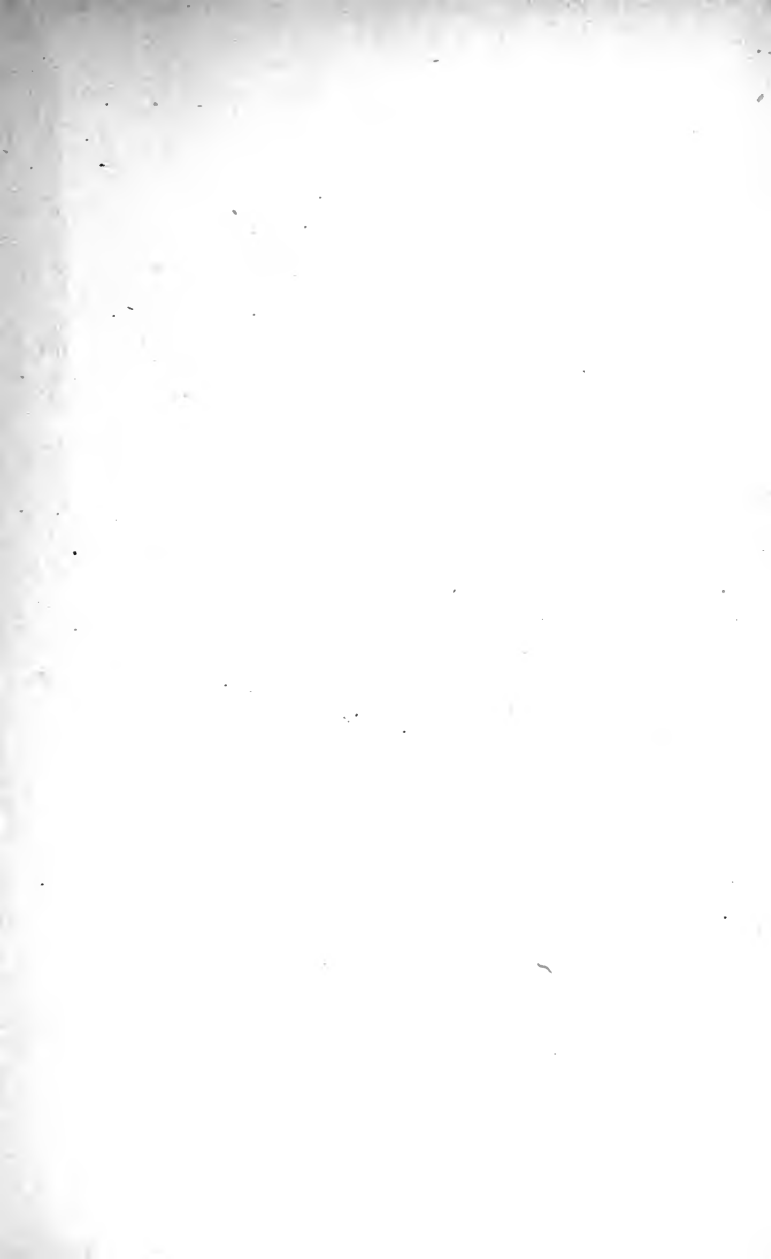
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